

disAbility access map

DisAbility Access Map

Accessibility Version



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Introduction

Welcome to Disability Access Map, a tool to help students with disabilities plan their route to college. [Click here to view the video introduction](#) and then continue. This tool is brought to you by AHEAD, the Disability Advisors Working Network, DARE and the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland.

Video Transcript (references buttons on the online tool – please ignore for tagged text version)

Welcome to Disability Access Map, a tool designed to get students with disabilities on the road to success. You can map your path to college step by step and we'll give you lots of great information and advice about college application procedures, what you need to do to prepare for college life, how to get supports in college and how to approach your first semester.

Once you start, simply click 'next' or 'previous' to move forward and back through the stages of the map. If you wish to view the map and jump to a different stage, just click the 'go to map' button and click on where you wish to go. Many sections will have clickable buttons with pop up information and videos so if you come across something that looks like a button, don't be afraid to click it and see.

If you are hearing impaired, please note that our videos are closed captioned. Just click the closed captions button on the video player when videos pop up to activate them.

If you are a screen reader user or use other assistive technologies which are not compatible with the map, you can find a tagged accessible document version at ahead.ie/accessmap.

This tool was brought to you by AHEAD, the Disability Advisors Working Network and the DARE scheme and was part funded by the Confederation of Student Services in Ireland.

Stage 1: Preparing to Apply

Stage 1 Introduction

[Click here to view the video introduction to this section.](#)

Video Transcript

A famous Irish Sportsman once said “fail to prepare.... prepare to fail” and he was spot on, so in this section, we’ll help you get ready for your college application. The fact is that even if you’ve done nothing else yet, in using this tool, you’ve already started your preparation for college and taken your first step on the map.

In this section we’ll cover choosing your course and ensuring you’ve got the right medical documentation for college, and we’ll tell you all about the Better Options college fair for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties.

Question – Course Choice

Do you already know which courses you want to apply for? [Click here if you do to skip the course choice section](#) or continue reading to find out more about choosing a course.

Career Guidance

Research

Research carried out by AHEAD shows that there are now well over 10,000 students with disabilities studying in all subject areas in Higher Education, so when you are considering the difficulties your disability might pose in going for a particular course, remember that it's likely that students with the same disability have gone before you.

In other words, be realistic but don't rule anything you're interested in out without fully researching it first!

Look Online

If you haven't yet got an idea what career direction you'd like to go in, [visit Careers Portal and check out their wealth of tools](#) to help you explore career options (including great videos showing you what different jobs are like on a day to day basis!).

Qualifax is Ireland's National Learner's Database featuring a listing on every course in Ireland. You can search by course title, location, level and a host of other criteria. [Go to Qualifax to find out what's available in your chosen field/area.](#)

Once you've narrowed down your field of study and some idea of the colleges you'd like to go for, it's time to do further research on the college's website to look deeper into the course content.

Guidance

Remember that if you are struggling to make a decision on your course choice or find out what suitable courses are out there, you can seek the advice of a career guidance counsellor.

If you are in school, you will likely have a guidance counsellor on site which you can make an appointment with.

Adults over 23 returning to education can avail of the [free guidance service offered by the Adult Education Guidance Initiative](#).

If neither of the above are applicable to you, you can hire a private practitioner - [see the IGC website to search for counsellors in your region](#).

College Fairs

College Fairs are a great way of gathering lots of course information in one sitting, as well as getting a chance to ask questions about courses face to face. There are many college fairs to choose from for example [the Higher Options fair which features most of Ireland's colleges](#) and some from other countries and the Better Options winter college fair, which is just for students with disabilities (more on this later).

If you have a particular course or college in mind, it's always a good idea to go to the college open day, see the campus and ask questions.

Course Choice Tips

Here's our top tips for choosing your course:

- Our top tip is to pick a course you are interested in. It sounds silly but often students pick courses because salaries are high in a particular career or for some other reason. The more interested you are in a subject, the more likely you are to study it and achieve a strong result.
- When searching for a course, bear in mind that location might be an issue – perhaps because you can't afford to rent or your disability requires you to be close to your family base or a medical facility.
- Aim high but set realistic goals. For example, if you think you are going to get between 300 and 400 points, don't waste time and energy researching a course that's likely to be 550 CAO points.
- If you are considering a course in a private college, be mindful that significant fees may apply and while legally disability supports should be provided, in

practice, services in private colleges are often not as well organised and well-funded as those in publicly funded colleges.

Question – Reports

Do you have the correct medical evidence of your disability for your college application? If you do, [click here to skip the reports section](#). If you don't or aren't too sure, then continue reading to view the section on medical reports.

Medical Reports

You need to start checking whether you have the correct medical documentation for your disability well in advance of applying for college, especially since waiting lists for consultants can be long if you do need to get a new report. Medical evidence of your disability is required for two main reasons:

1. To get educational supports when you get to college
2. To apply for the DARE scheme (more on what DARE is later)

Below you can see the requirements for DARE for each disability type, which are generally the same as for college supports.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder (including Asperger's)

Appropriate Professional:

Consultant Psychiatrist **OR** Psychologist **OR** Neurologist **OR** Paediatrician.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018 **OR** Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie for more in depth info on report requirements.](#)

ADD/ADHD

Appropriate Professional:

Consultant Psychiatrist **OR** Psychologist **OR** Neurologist **OR** Paediatrician.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018 **OR** Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

Must be less than three years old i.e. dated after 1 February 2014.

[Visit accesscollege.ie for more in depth info on report requirements.](#)

Blind/Vision Impaired

Appropriate Professional:

Ophthalmologist **OR** Ophthalmic Surgeon.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018 **OR** Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie) for more in depth info on report requirements.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Appropriate Professional:

(A) Applicants who have an audiogram: Diagnostic/ Clinical Audiologist registered with the Irish Academy of Audiologists (IAA) or HSE Audiologist

(B) Applicants who attend a School for the Deaf: Principal of School for the Deaf

(C) Applicants with a Cochlear Implant: Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) Consultant **OR** Cochlear Implant Programme Coordinator.

Type of Documentation Required:

(A) Applicants who have an audiogram: Audiogram

(B) Applicants who attend a School for the Deaf: Letter confirming attendance from Principal of School for the Deaf **OR** Evidence of Disability Form 2018.

(C) Applicants with a Cochlear Implant:

Existing report confirming cochlear implant **OR** Evidence of Disability Form 2018 (DARE does not accept reports from high street retailers).

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie) for more in depth info on report requirements.

DCD - Dyspraxia/ Dysgraphia

Appropriate Professional:

Full psycho educational report from Psychologist **AND**

Evidence of Disability Form 2018 **OR** Existing report from: Occupational Therapist **OR** Neurologist **OR** Physiotherapist.

Type of Documentation Required:

Full psycho educational report

AND

Evidence of Disability Form 2018 **OR** Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie). for more in depth info on report requirements.

Mental Health Condition

Appropriate Professional:

Consultant Psychiatrist on specialist register.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018

OR

Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

Must be less than three years old i.e. dated after **1 February 2014**.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie). for more in depth info on report requirements.

Neurological Conditions

Appropriate Professional:

Neurologist

OR

Other relevant Consultant.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018

OR

Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie). for more in depth info on report requirements.

Speech, Language & Communication Disorder

Appropriate Professional:

Speech and Language Therapist.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018

OR

Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie) for more in depth info on report requirements.

Significant Ongoing Illness

Appropriate Professional:

Relevant Consultant/ Specialist appropriate to the disability/condition.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018

OR

Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

Must be less than three years old i.e. dated after **1 February 2014**.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie) for more in depth info on report requirements.

Physical Disability

Appropriate Professional:

Orthopaedic Consultant

OR

Other relevant Consultant appropriate to the disability/ condition.

Type of Documentation Required:

Evidence of Disability Form 2018

OR

Existing report.

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie) for more in depth info on report requirements.

Specific Learning Difficulty (Dyslexia/Dyscalculia)

Appropriate Professional:

Psychologist

Type of Documentation Required:

Psychological Assessment Report

Required Age of Report:

No age limit.

Accompanying Documentation

In addition to a Psychological Assessment Report of any age completed by a psychologist, **applicants with a specific learning difficulty MUST also have two literacy or two numeracy attainment scores at or below the 10th percentile (Standard Score of 81 or below).**

These attainment scores can be from one (or a combination) of the following sources:

- 1) Scores from school-based attainment testing
- 2) Scores from attainment tests carried out by a psychologist.

Testing must have been carried out after **1 February 2015** and all applicants must submit an EIS completed by their school.

[Visit accesscollege.ie](http://accesscollege.ie). for more in depth info on report requirements.

Better Options College Fair

Better Options is an annual winter college fair run by AHEAD and DAWN for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties. Students can find out about courses and support services provided by colleges, as well as garner key information on the access routes for those with disabilities.

Many major colleges will be represented in the Exhibition hall and useful seminars will run concurrently. To find out more about this year's fair, [watch the Better Options promotional video by clicking here](#) or you can [view the Better Options web page now by clicking here](#).

Stage 1 Completed

Well done! You've completed Stage 1 of your journey. Now you can continue on to stage 2 where we look at the college application process.

Stage 2: The Application

Stage 2 Introduction

[Click to view the video introduction to the Application section of DisAbility Access Map.](#)

Video Transcript

So, you know what courses you're interested in and you are getting very excited about the possibility of college and then 'bang' – you start the application and you're left thinking eh.... there's quite a lot to do here.

On top of this you're in the middle of studying hard for exams and your college application is last thing you want on your mind.

Don't fear – in this section of Disability Access Map, we'll give you easy and clear information about applying for college as a student with a disability. We'll cover the disability related sections of the CAO, talk about the possibility of reduced points entry through DARE, and examine the application process for further education.

Question – Which Route?

Which route are you intending on applying through? Continue reading for information on the CAO (including DARE) or [click here to skip to info on applying to further education/PLC courses.](#)

The CAO

Most students looking to get a higher education college place in Ireland will apply through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Since information about the CAO is widely available (e.g. in [the CAO handbook](#)), we won't cover the core application info here but as a student with a disability, there are a few extra things to think about and in some cases, a few extra forms to complete. You might think of these as a bit of a pain at the time, but the information you provide can be of great benefit in informing prospective colleges of your disability, ensuring they are prepared for your arrival and in some cases, getting you entry to a course slightly below the standard points requirement through an entry scheme such as Dare.

We should say at this point that you are not obliged to tell the CAO or prospective colleges about your disability or specific learning difficulty, but we strongly recommend doing so.

CAO – Disclosure

There are a number of reasons why we recommend including information about your disability on your CAO form but here are the most important 2:

1. Doing so WILL NOT and legally CAN NOT work against you - colleges are legally obliged to support students with disabilities and cannot discriminate against them. If you disclose details of your disability on the CAO, it helps colleges to prepare for your arrival and ensure they can put supports in place in time for the start of the academic year.
2. Completing this information may make you eligible for a supplementary entry route such as DARE - in plain English this means that you could possibly gain entry to your desired course with less points than the standard requirement based on how your disability has affected your education to date – more on DARE later.

CAO – The Form

So, how do you go about giving disability related information on your CAO application?

Step 1

Once you've set up your online CAO account and entered your basic information, the first step is to go to your account home page, scroll down to the Disability/Specific Learning Difficulty section and click the 'Modify Disability/SLD Status'. In the next window, click Yes to the question reading 'Disability/Specific Learning Difficulty?'

Step 2

Once you've done that, you'll find that the text and button under the Disability/Specific Learning Difficulty Section on your CAO account homepage has changed. You now can see the 'Supplementary Information Form' button. Click it to go to the Supplementary Information Form (SIF).

Step 3

Next you will complete the **Supplementary Information Form (SIF)**. Here you will give information about what type of disability you have, any supports received in school and details about the impact your disability has had on your day to day education to date. You will also select whether or not you wish to apply for DARE (question 1) and be asked to submit two accompanying pieces of documentation through the post – your Educational Impact Statement and Evidence of Disability.

The information supplied will be forwarded to whatever colleges you have applied for to enable them to prepare for your arrival and will help them to determine what supports might need to be put in place for you.

What is DARE?

Some colleges offer a reduction in the standard CAO course entry points requirement to some students with disabilities, in recognition of the impact their disability has had on their education to date.

This type of admissions route is known as supplementary entry and students who qualify could end up securing a place below the standard points requirement. In real terms this could mean for example getting offered a course which is pitched at 366 points despite only getting 356 points in your Leaving Cert.

DARE is one such scheme involving a large number of colleges nationwide. Other colleges run their own supplementary entry schemes which work in a similar manner.

Colleges Participating in DARE

- Athlone Institute of Technology
- Cork Institute of Technology
- Dublin City University
- Dublin Institute of Technology
- Institute of Technology, Sligo
- Marino Institute of Education
- Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
- Maynooth University
- National College of Ireland
- NUI Galway
- Pontifical University, Maynooth
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
- St. Angela's College, Sligo
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Limerick

Colleges Running Their Own Supplementary Entry Schemes

- NUI Galway
- Pontifical University, Maynooth
- Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

- St. Angela's College, Sligo
- Trinity College Dublin
- University College Cork
- University College Dublin
- University of Limerick

DARE – Important Info

Let's first clear up a few important points of information about DARE:

1. Students with a verified disability are entitled to support in college regardless of whether or not they come through DARE. DARE is an admissions scheme for some students, while appropriate disability supports are available to ALL students with disabilities.
2. You will only know if you have received a reduced points place through DARE when the CAO first round offers are made in August. There are a limited number of DARE places available on each course and you will be in competition for those places with other DARE eligible students with disabilities. You will be notified of DARE eligibility in late June, but this simply means you have met the criteria to be considered for a reduced points place.
3. No student grants are attached to DARE eligibility - it is predominantly an admissions route to college. Students must be under 23 on Jan 1st of the application year to apply.

DARE – Eligibility

To be eligible for DARE you must meet both the DARE Educational Impact criteria and DARE Evidence of Disability criteria.

Meeting Educational Impact Criteria (Proven by submitting the completed Educational Impact Statement) + Meeting Evidence of Disability Criteria (Proven by submitting the appropriate medical documentation) = DARE Eligibility (which puts you under consideration for a reduced points place)

3 Key Dates for DARE

1. Apply to the CAO by Feb 1st 2018
2. Answer Yes to SIF Question 1 on your application (re DARE) & complete and submit the online Supplementary Information Form (SIF) by Mar 1st 2018
3. Send your supporting documents (Educational Impact Statement and appropriate evidence of disability) to the CAO, Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway by Apr 1st 2018

Dare – Educational Impact

The Educational Impact Statement (EIS) allows you and your school to provide detail of how your disability has impacted on your second level experience. The Educational Impact Statement is used to determine if you meet DARE criteria for educational impact of your disability and also helps to determine appropriate supports at third level.

This section needs to be coordinated by either your Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support Teacher, Year Head, Visiting Teacher (for applicants who are blind/ vision impaired or deaf/ hard of hearing), Deputy School Principal or School Principal.

It is important to note that it is unlikely that all 6 sections of the EIS will be relevant to you. Depending on the type of disability and how that disability has impacted on your individual educational experience, certain sections may be relevant and others may not. This form needs to be submitted to the CAO by April 1st.

View the impact criteria below.

Educational Impact Criteria

The educational impact statement will try to determine the following - Has your disability/ condition impacted on a combination of the following:

- Have you received intervention or supports in post-primary school?
- Has it impacted on your attendance or regularly disrupted your school day?
- Has it affected your school experience and well-being?
- Has it impacted on your learning or exam results?
- Has it caused any other educational impact?
- Required for applicants with Specific Learning Difficulty: is it severely impacting on your literacy or numeracy skills?

Applicants with a Specific Learning Difficulty must meet Indicator 6 plus one other indicator. All other applicants must meet any combination of two indicators from Indicators 1 to 5. [For more in depth info on the educational impact criteria and instructions on how to complete the form, visit accesscollege.ie.](#)

DARE – Evidence of Disability

As well as your Educational Impact Statement, you must submit medical evidence of your disability. Your evidence of disability documentation is used by DARE to establish whether or not you meet DARE's evidence of disability criteria and therefore overall DARE eligibility criteria. In addition, it is used by DARE colleges and universities to determine the kinds of supports you might need when you get to college.

This documentation should be submitted to the CAO by April 1st.

We covered the required documentation already during stage 1 – [if you want to go back and check out the Medical Reports section in stage 1 now, click here.](#)

DARE & HEAR

HEAR is another third level alternative admissions scheme which offers places on reduced points and extra college support to school leavers from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are resident in the Republic of Ireland.

You should apply to both DARE and HEAR if they are relevant to you. Applicants who apply and are deemed eligible for both DARE and HEAR will be prioritised by the participating colleges and universities when offering their reduced points places.

[For more information on HEAR, see accesscollege.ie.](#)

DARE – More Info

[You can visit accesscollege.ie for more indepth information on the DARE scheme](#) and the steps which need to be taken to be considered eligible.

If you would like to ask questions in person about DARE, then why not attend [the Better Options college fair for students with disabilities](#) in November or attend one of the nationwide DARE Advice Clinics taking place across the country on from 10:00-14:00 on Jan 20th 2018.

You can also call [AHEAD's help line for students with disabilities on 01-7164396 or email a query.](#)

DARE Advice Clinic Dates

Jan 20th 2018, 10:00-14:00

- **Cork** - University College Cork, Aula Maxima
- **Donegal** - Villa Rose Hotel, Ballybofey
- **Dublin** - Trinity Access Programmes, Goldsmith Hall, Pearse Street, Dublin 2
- **Kildare** - Maynooth University, The Phoenix
- **Kilkenny** - Maynooth University, Kilkenny Campus
- **Limerick** – University of Limerick, Kemmy Business School
- **Galway** - NUI Galway, Aula Maxima Lower
- **Midlands** - Athlone Institute of Technology, Coffee Dock, Main Building, Athlone
- **Monaghan** - Glencarn Hotel, Castleblaney, Co Monaghan
- **Sligo** - Glasshouse Hotel, Sligo

Other Dates

- **Kerry** - The Rose Hotel, Tralee Co. Kerry, **Wed 17 Jan, 5-8pm**
- **Waterford** - Woodlands Hotel, Dunmore Rd, Waterford, **Tues 23 Jan, 6-8pm**
- **Wexford** - Ferrycarrig Hotel, Wexford, **Thurs 18 Jan, 2-7pm**

[For more information on the clinics and directions to each location, visit accesscollege.ie.](https://www.accesscollege.ie)

Question – Further Education

Would you like to find out about applying to further education courses? If you would like to find out more, then continue reading. If not, [click here to skip the further education application section and go straight to stage 3 of the map!](#)

Further Ed Applications

PLC and further education courses offer a great entry point into third level education and can lead to progression on to higher education on completion. Unlike with CAO courses, students should make a direct application to the further education colleges of their choice. Visit the relevant college's website to find out about their application procedures. Some will offer online application while others may require an application by post.

Should the college application form ask whether or not you have a disability, we would recommend that you inform them of your disability and any other relevant information (e.g. previous supports received in school and the impact of your disability). Doing so WILL NOT and legally CAN NOT work against you - colleges are legally obliged to support students with disabilities and cannot discriminate against them. If you disclose details of your disability on your application, it helps colleges to prepare for your arrival and ensure they can put supports in place in time for the start of the academic year.

Further education application procedures may also involve a submission of portfolio work or an interview. If this is the case, be sure to inform the college if you have any accessibility requirements for interview e.g. a sign language interpreter.

Stage 2 Completed

Well done! You've completed Stage 2 of your journey and are ready to continue on to stage 3 where we look at getting ready for college.

Stage 3 – Preparing for College

[Click here to view the video introduction to the 'Preparing for College' section of DisAbility Access Map.](#)

Video Transcript

If and when you secure a place for college, you've done the hard bit. Now it's time to lay the ground work for a successful college experience and help to make your adaptation to campus life a breeze.....well, a little easier at least.

In this section we'll give you some great tips to ensure that when you arrive on campus, you are ready to learn and have some fun without having to sweat about the small stuff.

We'll cover the differences between college and school life, ensuring you've planned your finances correctly and brushing up on your academic skills before you arrive.

College v School

Before you start your preparation, it's important to understand the core day to day differences between school and college life.

Life in school goes something like this:

- Your day is fully planned out for you, with classes scheduled all day and homework assigned in the evening.
- Expected to do an average of 5-10 hours study per week.
- Attendance is mandatory and likely monitored by parents/guardians.
- Parents and teachers will remind and motivate you to get your work done.

While life in college is more like this:

- Classes are staggered with sometimes big gaps in between. You must organise your own day around lectures.
- Expected to study independently for a minimum of 10-15 hours a week.
- Attendance is entirely up to you – nobody will check up with you if you don't attend so you must be disciplined.
- You and only you are responsible for getting your work done on time – no lecturers will chase you for work.

Finance: Budgeting

Did you know that running out of money is one of the most common reasons that students drop out of college? This shows that it is absolutely essential to take a good hard look at your finances before you go to college to ensure that you've

thought of everything. Look through our top tips below on preparing financially for college and saving money when you get there.

Top Budgeting Tips

1. Set a couple of hours aside with excel to make a budget. List all your likely incomings (grants, part time work etc.) and outgoings (food, accommodation, phone bill, gas/electricity/TV bill, socialising, fees, stationary, books etc.) and see where you stand.
2. Learn to cook some staple meals in the summer before college, especially if you are going to be living away from home. Food made from scratch is much cheaper than take aways or TV dinners and much healthier to boot. It's also a great idea to bring your own lunch to college and even a flask of tea/coffee - the cost of those €2.50 cappuccinos stacks up pretty quickly!
3. A part-time job is a great way to supplement your income in college. However, be careful not to overload yourself with hours and impact your studies negatively. 10-15 working hours a week should be your maximum. During the summer, why not go full time and save!
4. Join clubs and societies. This is probably the cheapest way to have a great time and make friends. There are countless clubs and societies on most large campuses, with something to suit everyone. For your small membership fee you could get free breakfast with the debaters, free pizza with the film club, work it all off with a free dance class before finishing the day off with a night cap compliments of the French society.
5. Shop in a budget supermarket. Find the nearest one (Lidl, Aldi...even Tesco is pretty cheap) and build in to your schedule a time to go at least one a week. Local convenience stores are very expensive and you can buy the same items or similar for a fraction of the cost at a cheap supermarket.
6. If you plan to live away from home, shop around for cheaper accommodation. You might find that some unfashionable part of your destination city or town is perfectly nice, easy to get to college from and a lot cheaper than the trendy zones.
7. Check if you are eligible for grants or other funding - you'll find out more about available grants by clicking next.

Grants/Funding

There a number of different types of funding available to help you along your way. Some funds are specific to students with disabilities while all students are eligible to apply for others. Here we've included information about four key grants/fund.

The Student Grant

Formerly called the maintenance grant, this grant is the main source of financial help available from the Irish State for students in full-time PLCs and full-time higher

education undergraduate courses. Support is available to eligible students in most colleges in Ireland as well as eligible Irish students in many colleges in Northern Ireland, the UK and other EU States.

For eligible students, the grant is there to help with the various costs of participating in further or higher education for example the college registration fees and subsistence.

Family and/or personal income is a key factor that will be assessed when you apply for a student grant but there are also some other conditions. Students on part-time courses, access or foundation courses (in higher education institutions) and short courses are not eligible to apply for a student grant. Click here to watch a simple video guide from Spunout.ie on applying for this grant.

[Click here to view Spunout's video guide to applying for the Student Grant.](#)

The Fund for Students with Disabilities

This fund (which is not means tested) is available to undergraduates and postgraduates with disabilities studying in full time publicly funded courses which rank at level 5 or higher on the national qualifications framework. Please note that the following course types are ineligible - VTOS, Teagasc, part-time & private courses. It's designed to cover many of the educational support requirements which students with disabilities may require to compete on a level playing field with their peers, for example note takers, assistive technology, personal assistants, learning support and more.

It is not intended to cover disability-related costs such as medication or standard study-related costs such as books, stationary costs etc.

The normal process for securing this funding is:

1. Register with the Disability/Access service (or designated individual) in college by supplying them with medical documentation verifying your disability.
2. The Disability/Access service carry out a confidential needs assessment with you to determine what educational supports you require to minimise the impact of your disability on your learning.
3. The Disability/Access service apply for the Fund for Students with Disabilities on your behalf.
4. The college receives the funding from the National Access Office and puts the supports you need in place.

Students who regularly qualify for this fund are:

- Students registered blind or visually impaired.
- Students registered deaf or hearing impaired.
- Students with a specific learning difficulty such as Dyslexia.
- Students with a mobility impairment.

- Students who have significant long term illness.
- Students with medical verification of any stated condition that affects their ability to study at third level.

It's important to note that this is not a direct grant to the student but is given by the Higher Education Authority to the Disability / Access Service of the relevant institution who then put the support in place for the student. Equipment provided under this fund remains the property of the third level institution.

The Back to Education Allowance

Authorised by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) is an educational opportunities scheme for students over 21 years of age, unemployed people or lone parents currently on qualifying benefits.

This allowance is to cover the cost of living while availing of an educational opportunity.

If a student with a disability wishes to avail of this then they must be in receipt of disability allowance or another qualifying social welfare payment. The allowance can apply to those returning to education in second or third level.

Back to Education Allowance is paid at a standard rate, so if you are currently receiving a reduced rate of payment, you will be entitled to a higher rate of the allowance. Those already on Disability allowance can either choose to go on the Back to Education Allowance or remain on Disability Allowance.

The Student Assistance Fund

The Student Assistance Fund provides financial assistance for full-time higher education students who are experiencing financial difficulties whilst attending college. Students can apply for Student Assistance to help them with either temporary or ongoing financial difficulties and is designed for expenses such as books, class materials, rent, heating/lighting bills, medical expenses etc. The Student Assistance Fund provides a further source of funding for higher education students in addition to the Student Grant.

Each year, the State allocates a certain amount of Student Assistance funding to all publicly funded higher education colleges based on the size of the college's full-time student population. Students in need of financial support can then make application to the college for assistance under the Fund.

The Student Assistance Fund is not available in further education/PLC colleges.

Academic Skills

The summer before you go to college is a great time to reflect on your academic skills and see what you might need to brush up on in the months before you arrive

on campus. Could my typing be faster? How are my reading skills? What kinds of assistive technology is out there to help me reduce the impact of my disability?

These are just some of the questions you might ask yourself so put aside some time to research and practice areas you are weak on.

AHEAD have produced a guide to writing assignments in which we aim to take the mystery out of academic writing for students with disabilities. [Click here to watch a video about our assignment writing guide.](#)

Remember that when it comes to academic skills, technology is your friend and there are countless apps out there to help with everything from time management and project planning, to reading documents aloud, spelling and grammar. We'll show you some below.

10 Useful Apps

Here are 10 examples of great apps for students.

1. RefMe

RefMe is an ingenious referencing app allowing you to collect all your references by project in one easy place. Just use your camera to snap a barcode on any book and RefME will find the referencing information and put it into your preferred citation style.

[Video: Click to view RefMe in action \(warning – no narration or voiceover, video only\).](#)

2. Evernote

Evernote offers cloud storage for all your files, favourite webpages, photos etc. Key is the integrations with countless other apps and devices meaning you can save stuff to it so easily. Also great tags feature to help you organise and find your content.

[Video: Click to view Evernote in action.](#)

3. Coggle

Coggle is a web based mind mapping app which is great for project planning in a more visual way. Draw your project as a series of connected idea bubbles and move sections/ideas around to make sense of it.

[Video: Click to view Coggle in action.](#)

4. Grammarly

Grammarly is web based subscription service offering advanced spelling, grammar and citation checking - particularly useful for those with specific learning difficulties like Dyslexia.

[Video: Click to view Grammarly in action.](#)

5. Cogi

Capture audio highlights of a lecture with Cogi. Uses 15 sec buffer so when you realise 'this is an important part' and tap 'Record' it starts recording from 15 sec previously. Recording app designed to assist people who already take reasonably good paper notes!

[Video: Click to view Cogi in action.](#)

6. Headspace

Look after your mental health in college with Headspace, the world's leading mindfulness app. It teaches the basics of mindfulness to enable students to clear their busy minds and keep their stress levels in check.

[Video: Click to view Headspace in action.](#)

7. Office Lens

Office Lens uses the camera on your phone to scan documents and allows you to save to your cloud storage accounts e.g. Evernote or share via email. Great for grabbing stuff for your projects from the library.

[Video: Click to view Office Lens in action.](#)

8. Trello

Trello is a brilliant task management app with 'to do' lists, reminders, task completion status and several other project planning functions. The shared workflow features make it particularly great for group work.

[Video: Click to view Trello in action.](#)

9. Glide

Glide is like any other messaging app (viber, what's app etc.) except it's geared towards easy video messaging, which makes it a great alternative for deaf students communicating with other sign language users.

[Video: Click to view Glide in action \(warning – structure of video and lack of audio description makes this video unsuitable for blind users\).](#)

10. CloudCal

CloudCal is a great visual, colour based scheduling app – can for example set a colour for lectures, another for study, another for project work and see your schedule visually. Add tasks and notes too!

[Video: Click to view CloudCal in action.](#)

Academic Tools

Below are two websites which you should bookmark. Both are packed full of great advice, and full of information about tools which can help you to improve your academic performance.

The Student Toolkit

The Student Toolkit aims to give students tips, tools (e.g. apps) and advice to help them succeed at college. The toolkit focuses on 6 major facets of college life: Exams, Lectures, Assignments, Communication, Well-being, Campus.

[Click here to go the Student Toolkit website now.](#)

RED – Resources for Education

RED's comprehensive set of resources were designed to help college students with some of the key generic skills required for life & study e.g. critical thinking, writing & note-taking as well as life skills like finance management.

[Click here to go to the RED website now.](#)

Tips from past students

Past students have shared with us their "things they wish they'd known about different areas of college life. Read them below.

Study

- People who say they aren't studying are lying
- 45 minute chunks are the best way
- Your lecture notes are invaluable
- Planning is the key
- Study early, study often

Exams

- The past papers are your best friend
- Don't forget your student card
- Bring on the Lucozade
- No such thing as too many biros
- Check, double-check and recheck venues and times

Social Media Use

- If you wouldn't say it in person; don't say it online
- Once it's online you'll never be able to take it back

- Before posting a picture ask yourself- do I want my parents/boss/little sibling to see this?
- Bullying is not ok- report it

Library

- Come April all hell will break loose
- The early bird catches the desk (and the socket)
- Now is the time to read those recommended reading list books- they will be long checked out the day before the exam
- Using the catalogue correctly can save you time- ask the library staff to show you how

Sharing with Housemates

- Respect each other's property and privacy
- Do a rota for cleaning
- Have a kitty for shared expenses such a loo roll!
- If somebody is on the couch for longer than a week they need to pay rent
- Nominate a day of the week as a "house" night- you could have a theme- Mexican night, Chinese night etc- get creative

Stage 3 Completed

Well done! You've completed Stage 3 of your journey. Now you can continue on to the final stage of your journey where we look at settling in to college in your first semester.

Stage 4 – Your First Semester

[Click here to view the video introduction to the 'Your First Semester' section of Disability Access Map.](#)

Video Transcript

If you've gotten this far, you really need to give yourself a pat on the back because getting to college is a massive achievement! So go you!

College can be a daunting place when you first arrive but don't worry, you'll soon get your head around it and realise that it's full of great opportunities to learn and have the craic, but there are some things you can do to make life easier for yourself.

In this section we've got lots of information and tips to help you adapt to college life as smoothly as possible. We'll give you our top 5 tips for new students, talk about finding your way around campus and give you the low down on all the different services which may be available to you, particularly as a student with a disability.

Top 5 Tips for New Students with Disabilities

Check out AHEAD's top 5 tips video which gives you a two minute overview of the 5 most important things you should think about as a new college student with a disability. Covers important topics like orientation, disability services and more.

[Click here to watch our top 5 tips video.](#)

Orientation on Campus

Attend your orientation/induction week as this is a great way of finding out about your college, your course, using the library and the Student Services available. Explore and find your way around the campus; get a map, locate your lecture halls, restaurant, library, sports centre etc. If you have a mobility or sensory disability you should consider asking for an individual orientation session (some colleges will organise these as a matter of course) before the start of term so you can become familiar with routes to and from lectures, the library, the canteen etc.

For those with mobility impairments, you may need to think about the following also:

- Location of accessible parking spaces in relation to your lectures.
- Are there accessible toilets near your lecture rooms/library?
- Are the entrance and hall doors automatic/easy to open and close?

College Services – General

At the start of the year, you should have received a student handbook which lists all of the different services available, if not, you should browse through your college's website which should list the services they have available. Below is a list of the most common student services but it's important to bear in mind that not all of them may be available in your college.

Student Union

Every college has a Student Union which is the representative body for the students of the college. You automatically become a member when you first register with the college. The Student Union is involved in many student issues concerning both its own college and students' rights in general. It is also a valuable source of information on subjects ranging from accommodation to financial or welfare advice and often run awareness weeks. Student Unions also usually play a big role in the supporting of student clubs and societies.

Library

All colleges have a student library and it will be one of the most important resources you will use during your time in 3rd level education. If you have a specific disability related need, you should make yourself known to a member of the library staff to find out about the additional services the library may offer for students with disabilities, for example; an extended lending service for those registered with the disability or access office.

Careers Service

Most colleges have a Careers Service office and dedicated careers advisors who can assist you individually with preparing your CV, interview skills, job seeking, career planning and advice. They may also run various workshops throughout the year such as employer talks, career days, CV workshops etc.

Counselling Service

Some colleges provide a full-time counselling service while others only a part-time one. For many 1st year students, college can be a stressful and lonely time; counsellors are trained to help students cope, and you should not be afraid to avail of their expertise. You will more than likely need to make an appointment with the counsellor so check before knocking on their door. Some counselling services also offer additional support such as bereavement counselling and run stress management workshops.

Health Services

As a student, you may be on tight budget, however, it shouldn't mean your health has to suffer, so it is worth checking out what type of health services your college offers. Some colleges have full on-campus health centres with an attending doctor and nurse and visiting dentist whilst others may not. They may charge a nominal fee for consultations, tests and prescriptions however, there can be financial assistance towards the cost of routine dental work, ophthalmic treatment and physiotherapy. Check with your health centre or your student union for more details.

Chaplaincy Service

In the larger colleges there can be more than one chaplain of either gender and/or from different religious denominations. Some chaplaincy services have quiet rooms where students can come to meditate or relax. Remember that you do not have to be practicing your religion nor of the same religious denomination, to use the different services provided by the chaplaincy office. Some chaplains also fulfil the role of counsellor in the college/university.

Disability Service

Most 3rd level institutions now provide a number of support services to students with disabilities through the Disability / Access Service. Staff numbers in these services can range from a single designated person in small colleges to large teams in the big universities. The main role of these services is to support students with disabilities and ensure they can participate in all aspects of student life as well as to help minimise the impact of their disability on their learning. In other words, they're there to help and registering with them should be a priority for all students with disabilities. More on this in the next section.

Disability Support Service

Most third level institutions now provide a number of support services to students with disabilities through the Disability / Access Service. Staff numbers in these services can range from a single designated person in small colleges to large teams in the big universities.

The main role of these services is to support students with disabilities and ensure they can participate fully in all aspects of student life as well as to help minimise the impact of their disability on their learning.

In other words, they're there to help and registering with them should be a priority for all students with disabilities.

How to Register

If you are coming through the CAO and ticked the box for disability, it's likely that the disability office in your college will contact you to organise registration. If you don't hear from them by early September, contact them directly to arrange an appointment.

If you are in a further education college or have not disclosed your disability on the CAO, you will need to get in touch with the Disability Officer yourself to arrange registration.

In smaller colleges, it may be just one person responsible and you may not know who that person is. In this instance, pay a visit to the college reception or the principal's/president's office and make further enquires.

If you have not come through the CAO or did not send medical documentation confirming your disability to the CAO, then you will have to provide the Disability Officer with appropriate evidence on registration.

What Happens Next?

Once you've registered with the Disability Support Service/Person in your college, they will arrange a needs assessment with you.

A needs assessment is essentially a confidential chat about your course and how your disability might impact on your work at college. The aim is to identify areas where the disability officer can put measures in place to make sure you can show your potential.

Depending on your disability and its impact on you, these measures could include giving you extra time in exams, supplying you with assistive technology, providing you with study support and organising sign language interpretation for lectures, to name just a few.

Find Out More About Your Disability Service

Most college websites will contain a section for students with disabilities detailing the kinds of supports they provide and noting how to get in touch. In smaller colleges, you may have to contact the disability support officer/person directly to get more information. Below, we have listed direct links for the disability service web pages of most of Ireland's major colleges.

Institutes of Technology

- [Athlone Institute of Technology](#)
- [Cork Institute of Technology](#)
- [Dublin Institute of Technology](#)
- [Dundalk Institute of Technology](#)
- [Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art Design and Technology](#)

- [Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology](#)
- [Institute of Technology Blanchardstown](#)
- [Institute of Technology Carlow](#)
- [Institute of Technology Sligo](#)
- [Institute of Technology Tallaght](#)
- [Institute of Technology Tralee](#)
- [Letterkenny Institute of Technology](#)
- [Limerick Institute of Technology](#)
- [Waterford Institute of Technology](#)

Universities

- [Dublin City University](#)
- [National College of Art & Design](#)
- [National College of Ireland](#)
- [University College Cork](#)
- [University College Dublin](#)
- [National University of Ireland, Galway \(NUIG\)](#)
- [Maynooth University](#)
- [Trinity College](#)
- [University of Limerick](#)

Well Done!

Well done! You made it to the end of DisAbility Access Map, and hopefully (if you're not already there), you'll soon be winging your way to college. Before you finish though, [we would love it if you could leave us some feedback by filling out this short survey](#).

Lastly, below you'll find a big collection of really useful links and resources which you can draw on throughout your journey to college. Good Luck!

[Stay in touch – join the AHEAD mailing list!](#)

Resources

Before you go, we've collected some categorised useful links and resources for you below.

Course Choice/Guidance

- [Careers Portal – find out what it's like to do different jobs before choosing a course with these great interview videos.](#)
- [Higher Options – Ireland's largest college fair featuring over 170 colleges, universities and institutes of further education.](#)
- [Better Options – Ireland's only college fair aimed at students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties.](#)
- [Qualifax – a searchable database of every college course available in Ireland.](#)
- [IGC Website – if you are interested in hiring a private guidance counsellor, you can find a list of private practitioners here.](#)

College Application

- [CAO Handbook – detailing all of the key information about your CAO Application.](#)
- [DARE – Disability Access Route to Education, scheme offering reduced points entry to a number of qualifying students with disabilities. Detailed information provided on how to apply.](#)
- [HEAR – A scheme offering the possibility of reduced points entry to college for students from socio-economically disadvantaged areas.](#)
- [AHEAD – our FAQs on accessing college \(including DARE and the CAO\) as a student with a disability.](#)
- [Citizens Information – their page on applying to college in Ireland.](#)
- [Careers Portal – watch their CAO Video Guide here.](#)

Student Finances

- [studentfinance.ie](#) – detailing all of the different grants and funding streams available to students.
- [SUSI – the home of the student maintenance grant. Includes detailed information on who’s eligible and how to apply.](#)
- [AHEAD – our page on funding your college experience.](#)
- [Consumer Protection – great tips on managing your money at college and making sure you get good value for money.](#)
- [Red@UCC - an online financial resource for students, where you will be able to access information regarding your student finances](#)
- [Budget Planner Tool – from the Consumer Protection Agency. Pop in your income and outgoings and it will do the rest!](#)

Academic Help

- [Student Toolkit – great academic tips, advice and tools in the areas of exams, lectures, assignments, campus, well-being and communication.](#)
- [Red@UCC – resources and advice in the areas of critical thinking, reading/writing, note-taking and assessment.](#)
- [USI – the Union of Students in Ireland’s web page on planning your study for exams.](#)
- [Spunout – exam prep tips from Spunout.](#)
- [Careers Portal – collection of videos on improving your academic performance.](#)

Assistive Technology

- [UCD AT – UCD’s assistive technology website pointing students towards useful apps etc.](#)
- [UrAbility – Ireland’s largest provider of assistive technology and AT training.](#)
- [Assist Ireland – A Citizen’s Information website focused on the different types of assistive technology available and how to get it.](#)
- [AHEAD – our page on assistive technology for students.](#)
- [Enable Ireland’s Assistive Technology Training Service – National training service offering online training for assistive technology applications and devices.](#)

College Life

- [AHEAD – our web section with tips and advice for new college students covering everything from college services to work placement and study abroad.](#)
- [Spunout – Top tips for college newbies.](#)
- [USI – Accommodation advice from the union of students in Ireland.](#)

Other Support Services

- [Aware – organisation offering free advice and services to people struggling with their mental health.](#)
- [Aspire – Asperger Syndrome Association of Ireland](#)
- [Dyslexia Association of Ireland](#)
- [Epilepsy Ireland](#)
- [Cystic Fibrosis Ireland](#)
- [Dyspraxia Association of Ireland](#)
- [Irish Deaf Society](#)
- [Irish Wheelchair Association](#)
- [Multiple Sclerosis Society of Ireland](#)
- [National Council for the Blind](#)
- [PleaseTalk.org – a website detailing the available Mental Health services in colleges nationwide.](#)
- [Vantastic – Transport service for people with mobility impairments](#)

Your Legal Rights

[AHEAD – our page on the legislation affecting students with disabilities.](#)

[Student Finance – page describing which students are entitled to have supports funded by the Fund for students with disabilities.](#)

[AHEAD – our page on disclosing your disability to an employer or college.](#)