

An Analysis of CAO 1st Preference Applications 2013

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Table of Contents	Page
1. Overall Applications 2000-2013	3
2. Level 8 First Preference Applications 2009-2013	4
3. Level 7/6 First Preference Applications 2009-2013	8
4. Applications from Britain and Northern Ireland 2013	12
5. Mature (23+) CAO Applicants 2009-2013	13
6. Second and Third Preference Applications 2013	14
Key Points 2013	16
Composition of Disciplines	17

An Analysis of CAO First Preference Applications 1 Feb 2013

1. Overall Applications

The following short paper outlines changes in CAO first preference applications by sector, level and discipline from 1 February 2009 to 2013. First preference applications give us a good early indication of students discipline preferences for the upcoming academic year (2013/14). They allow us to identify changing trends in discipline choice.

Table 1: Overall number of CAO Applicants¹ 2000 – 2013 (1 Feb)

Year	Number of Applicants	Change over previous year	% Change over previous year
2000	60,321		
2001	62,849	2,528	4.2%
2002	62,294	-555	-0.9%
2003	62,802	508	0.8%
2004	60,174	-2,628	-4.2%
2005	60,126	-48	-0.1%
2006	59,485	-641	-1.1%
2007	61,961	2,476	4.2%
2008	63,868	1,907	3.1%
2009	67,634	3,766	5.9%
2010	71,843	4,209	6.2%
2011	71,466	-377	-0.5%
2012	71,648	182	0.3%
2013	71,151	-497	-0.7%

Source: CAO

- Table 1 shows a decrease (-0.7%) in applicants in 2013, following a slight increase in 2012. This represents 497 fewer CAO applications.

¹ Applicants can make an application to both the Level 8 and Level 7/6 lists. Therefore an applicant may have a first preference choice on both lists and will be offered their highest preference from both lists. It is also the case that a student may only make an application to one list.

2. Level 8 First Preference Applications 2009 – 2013

Table 2 outlines the changes in first preference level 8 applications in the various sectors of the higher education system.

Table 2: Sectoral Changes in Level 8 First Preference Applications 2009 - 2013

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Colleges of Education	3,830	6.5	3,747	6.0	3,593	5.8	3,189	5.1	2,891	4.8
Institutes of Technology	16,189	27.5	18,075	29.1	18,014	29.3	18,582	30.0	18,244	30.0
Universities	36,615	62.3	38,047	61.3	37,639	61.2	38,150	61.6	37,670	62.0
Others	2,165	3.7	2,213	3.6	2,222	3.6	1,925	3.1	1,934	3.2
Total	58,799	100	62,082	100	61,468	100	61,846	100	60,739	100

Source: CAO

- First preference applications to level 8 courses decreased by 1.8% from 2012 to 2013, a decrease of 1,107 applications.
- The Universities and Institutes of Technology showed decreases in applicants of 1.3% (480) and 1.8% (338) respectively, and applications to the Colleges of Education continued to decline, showing a decrease of 9.3% (298). Institutions under the 'Other' category have remained static since 2012.
- First preferences to Universities make up 62% of all level 8 first preference applications; Institutes of Technology make up 30%, Colleges of Education 4.8% and Other Colleges 3.2%.

Tables 3a and 3b review trends in first preference applications by discipline over previous years.

Table 3a: Level 8 First Preference Application by Discipline
2009 – 2013

Discipline	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Engineering	2,309 (3.9%)	2,530 (4.1%)	2,588 (4.2%)	2,668 (4.3%)	2,813 (4.6%)
Construction	2,318 (3.9%)	1,824 (2.9%)	1,379 (2.2%)	1,188 (1.9%)	1,035 (1.7%)
Computing	2,669 (4.5%)	2,984 (4.8%)	3,374 (5.5%)	4,037 (6.5%)	4,022 (6.6%)
Science	3,911 (6.7%)	4,194 (6.8%)	4,029 (6.6%)	4,337 (7.0%)	4,570 (7.5%)
Total Technology	11,207 (19.1%)	11,532 (18.6%)	11,370 (17.7%)	12,230 (19.8%)	12,440 (20.5%)
Agriculture and Veterinary	1,393 (2.4%)	1,431 (2.3%)	1,665 (2.7%)	1,862 (3.0%)	1,848 (3.0%)
Nursing	5,227 (8.9%)	5,541 (8.9%)	5,585 (9.1%)	5,775 (9.3%)	5,807 (9.6%)
Medicine	3,356 (5.7%)	3,755 (6.0%)	3,591 (5.8%)	3,719 (6.0%)	3,480 (5.7%)
Dentistry	304 (0.5%)	347 (0.6%)	298 (0.5%)	295 (0.5%)	287 (0.5%)
Other Healthcare	3,148 (5.4%)	3,583 (5.8%)	4,068 (6.6%)	4,217 (6.8%)	4,415 (7.3%)
Arts and Humanities	14,550 (24.7%)	15,851 (25.5%)	15,395 (25.0%)	14,688 (23.7%)	14,453 (23.8%)
Education	6,813 (11.6%)	6,608 (10.6%)	6,652 (10.8%)	6,081 (9.8%)	5,558 (9.2%)
Business and Law	9,666 (16.4%)	9,216 (14.8%)	8,547 (13.9%)	8,509 (13.8%)	8,432 (13.9%)
Social Services	1,699 (2.9%)	2,311 (3.7%)	2,367 (3.9%)	2,375 (3.8%)	2,033 (3.3%)
Services	1,436 (2.4%)	1,907 (3.1%)	1,930 (3.1%)	2,095 (3.4%)	1,986 (3.3%)
Total	58,799 (100%)	62,082 (100%)	61,468 (100%)	61,846 (100%)	60,739 (100%)

Source: CAO

**Table 3b: Level 8 First Preference Application by Discipline
One year and five year Change**

Discipline	2009	2012	2013	% of applications	1 year change	5 Year Change
Engineering	2,309	2,668	2,813	4.6%	5.4%	21.8%
Construction	2,318	1,188	1,035	1.7%	-12.9%	-55.3%
Computing	2,669	4,037	4,022	6.6%	-0.4%	50.7%
Science	3,911	4,337	4,570	7.5%	5.4%	16.8%
Total Technology	11,207	12,230	12,440	20.5%	1.7%	11.0%
Agriculture and Veterinary	1,393	1,862	1,848	3.0%	-0.8%	32.7%
Nursing	5,227	5,775	5,807	9.6%	0.6%	11.1%
Medicine	3,356	3,719	3,480	5.7%	-6.4%	3.7%
Dentistry	304	295	287	0.5%	-2.7%	-5.6%
Other Healthcare	3,148	4,217	4,415	7.3%	4.7%	40.2%
Arts and Humanities	14,550	14,688	14,453	23.8%	-1.6%	-0.7%
Education	6,813	6,081	5,558	9.2%	-8.6%	-18.4%
Business and Law	9,666	8,509	8,432	13.9%	-0.9%	-12.8%
Social Services	1,699	2,375	2,033	3.3%	-14.4%	19.7%
Services	1,436	2,095	1,986	3.3%	-5.2%	38.3%
Total	58,799	61,846	60,739	100.0%	-1.8%	3.3%

- First preference applications to Technology courses continue to show an increase in total proportion of discipline choices. These have increased from 17.7% in 2011 to 19.8% in 2012 and 20.5% in 2013. In numerical terms, the number of students studying Technology courses increased from 12,230 in 2012 to 12,440 in 2013.
- First preferences applications to Science courses in 2013 have increased by 5.4% from 4,337 in 2012 to 4,570 in 2013, making up 7.5% of all first preference level 8 applications.
- Engineering increased again in 2013 to 2,813 from 2,668 in 2012, an increase of 5.4%. These now make up 4.6% of all first preference level 8 applications.
- First preference applications to Computing courses remain static in 2013 with 4,022 applications, compared with 4,037 in 2012. They now constitute 6.6% of all level 8 first preference applications.
- First preference applications to Other Healthcare courses increased from 4,217 to 4,415, making up 7.3% of all 2013 level 8 first preferences.

- While Arts and Humanities applications remain strong, with the highest proportion of first preferences at 23.8%, there is a slight decrease from previous years, down by 1.6% from 2012, from 14,688 first preference applications in 2012 to 14,453 in 2013.
- First preference applications to Agriculture and Veterinary courses remain static in 2013, with 1,848 applications (compared with 1,862 in 2012); these make up 3% of all first preference applications.
- 2013 first preference applications to Medicine are down by 6.4% on 2012 applications from 3,719 in 2012 to 3,480 in 2013, making up 5.7% of all 2013 level 8 first preferences.
- In line with the trend over previous years, Construction first preference applications declined again in 2013, from 1,188 in 2012 to 1,035 in 2013. The overall proportion of Construction first preferences in 2013 make up 1.7% of all first preference applications compared to 6.1% in 2008.
- First preference applications to Education courses showed a decrease in 2013, from 9.8% in 2012 to 9.2% in 2013. In numerical terms there has been a decrease in first preference applications from 6,081 in 2012 to 5,558 in 2013.
- There was a decrease in Services first preference applications from 2,095 in 2012 to 1,986 in 2013. Services constitute 3.3% of all first preference applications compared to 2.3% in 2008.
- Business and Law first preference applications continued to decline from 8,509 in 2012 to 8,432 in 2013. They now attract 13.9% of all first preference applicants compared to 17.2% in 2008.

3. Level 7/6 First Preference Applications 2009 – 2013

Table 4 outlines the changes in first preference level 7/6 applications in the various sectors of the higher education system.

Table 4: Sectoral Changes in Level 7/6 First Preference Applications 2009 - 2013

	2009		2010		2011		2012		2013	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Institutes of Technology	36,281	93.1	38,622	93.2	38,521	93.0	37,622	93.7	34,936	93.4
Universities	837	2.1	792	2	733	1.8	774	1.9	693	1.9
Others	1,861	4.8	2,024	4.8	2,162	5.2	1,772	4.4	1,770	4.8
Total	38,979	100	41,438	100	41,416	100	40,168	100	37,399	100

Source: CAO

- Table 4 shows the number of first preference applications to level 7/6 courses has continued to decrease in 2013, with 37,399 applications for 2013, a drop of 6.9%. This represents a decrease of 2,769 applications.
- The Institute of Technology sector remains the sector attracting the bulk of the applicants (93.4%) for level 7/6 courses.

Tables 5a and 5b outline changes in first preference level 7/6 applications by discipline from 2009 – 2013.

Table 5a: Level 7/6 First Preference Applications by Discipline
2009-2013

Discipline	Level 6 & 7 1st Preference Applications				
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Engineering	3,773 (9.7%)	4,321 (10.4%)	4,093 (9.9%)	3,786 (9.4%)	3,758 (10.0%)
Construction	3,213 (8.2%)	2,280 (5.5%)	1,614 (3.9%)	1,425 (3.5%)	1,198 (3.2%)
Computing	2,477 (6.4%)	2,967 (7.2%)	3,153 (7.6%)	3,659 (9.1%)	3,492 (9.3%)
Science	3,356 (8.6%)	4,008 (9.7%)	4,209 (10.2%)	4,365 (10.9%)	4,202 (11.2%)
<i>Total Technology</i>	12,819 (32.9%)	13,576 (32.8%)	13,069 (31.6%)	13,235 (32.9%)	12,650 (33.8%)
Agriculture and Veterinary	1,765 (4.5%)	1,879 (4.5%)	2,343 (5.7%)	2,405 (6.0%)	2,290 (6.1%)
Other Healthcare	2,149 (5.5%)	2,257 (5.4%)	2,560 (6.2%)	2,607 (6.5%)	2,658 (7.1%)
Arts and Humanities	3,809 (9.8%)	3,697 (8.9%)	4,103 (9.9%)	3,965 (9.9%)	3,489 (9.3%)
Education	841 (2.2%)	1,256 (3.0%)	1,437 (3.5%)	1,327 (3.3%)	1,474 (3.9%)
Business and Law	8,184 (21.0%)	7,977 (19.3%)	7,075 (17.1%)	6,411 (16.0%)	5,966 (16.0%)
Social Services	4,580 (11.7%)	4,765 (11.5%)	4,451 (10.7%)	3,895 (9.7%)	3,158 (8.4%)
Services	4,832 (12.4%)	6,031 (14.6%)	6,378 (15.4%)	6,323 (15.7%)	5,714 (15.3%)
Total	38,979 (100%)	41,438 (100%)	41,416 (100%)	40,168 (100%)	37,399 (100%)

Source: CAO

Table 5b: Level 7/6 First Preference Applications by Discipline
One year and five year Change

	2009	2012	2013	% of applications	1 year change	5 Year Change
Engineering	3,773	3,786	3,758	10.0%	-0.7%	-0.4%
Construction	3,213	1,425	1,198	3.2%	-15.9%	-62.7%
Computing	2,477	3,659	3,492	9.3%	-4.6%	41.0%
Science	3,356	4,365	4,202	11.2%	-3.7%	25.2%
<i>Total Technology</i>	<i>12,819</i>	<i>13,235</i>	<i>12,650</i>	<i>33.8%</i>	<i>-4.4%</i>	<i>-1.3%</i>
Agriculture and Veterinary	1,765	2,405	2,290	6.1%	-4.8%	29.7%
Other Healthcare	2,149	2,607	2,658	7.1%	2.0%	23.7%
Arts and Humanities	3,809	3,965	3,489	9.3%	-12.0%	-8.4%
Education	841	1,327	1,474	3.9%	11.1%	75.3%
Business and Law	8,184	6,411	5,966	16.0%	-6.9%	-27.1%
Social Services	4,580	3,895	3,158	8.4%	-18.9%	-31.0%
Services	4,832	6,323	5,714	15.3%	-9.6%	18.3%
Total	38,979	40,168	37,399	100.0%	-6.9%	-4.1%

- First preference applications to Technology disciplines decreased in number from 13,235 in 2012 to 12,650 in 2013, a decrease of 4.4%. However, Technology applications make up an increasing proportion of all first preference applications, at 33.8% in 2013 compared with 32.9% in 2012.
- There was a decrease in Science first preference applications in 2013 of 3.7% from 4,365 applications in 2012 to 4,202 in 2013. Science now makes up 11.2% of all level 7/6 first preference applications.
- Computing applications showed a one-year decrease of 4.6% in 2013 from 3,659 in 2012 to 3,492 in 2013, following increases over the last number of years. Computing now constitutes 9.3% of all first preference level 7/6 applications compared to 5.5% in 2008.
- The number of Engineering level 7/6 first preference applications remained roughly static in 2013 at 3,758 (compared with 3,786 in 2012) with Engineering courses obtaining 10% of all level 7/6 first preference applications.
- The proportion of level 7/6 first preference applications to Healthcare courses has increased from 6.5% in 2012 to 7.1% in 2013. Healthcare courses are one of two areas (Education the other) where the actual number of applications has increased, from 2,607 in 2012 to 2,658 in 2013.

- Education first preference applicants show a small increase in 2013 from 1,327 to 1,474 applicants and in terms of proportion of all level 7/6 first preference applications increased from 3.3% to 3.9%.
- The proportion of level 7/6 first preference applications to Services courses decreased in 2013, making up 15.3% of first preference level 6/7 applicants.
- Construction level 7/6 first preference applications declined again in 2013 to 1,198 from 1,425 in 2012, with a 15.9% decrease in numbers from 2012. The overall proportion of Construction first preferences make up 3.2% of all level 7/6 first preference applications.
- Arts and Humanities courses have decreased in terms of their proportion share (9.3% in 2013 compared with 9.9% in 2012); and numbers have declined by 12% since 2012 from 3,965 to 3,489 in 2013.
- The number of first preference applications to Social Services continues to decline for the third consecutive year, decreasing to 8.4% of the share of all first preference applications. Social Services have seen the biggest drop in actual level 7/6 applications of 737 fewer applications, at 5,714 first preferences.
- First preference applications to Agriculture and Veterinary courses have fallen in 2013 to 2,290 level 7/6 first preference applications from 2,405 in 2012. Such courses constitute 6.1% of first preference in 2013.
- Business and Law first preference applications have dropped by 6.9% in 2013 to 5,966 from 6,411 in 2012, but retain a share of 16.0% of all level 7/6 first preference applications, the same share as in 2012.

4. Applicants from Britain and Northern Ireland 2013

- The number of applications from the Britain- to Irish institutions decreased from 1,291 in 2012 to 1,159 in 2013, a decrease of 10.2%.
- Applications from Northern Ireland applicants showed an increase from 1,139 in 2012 to 1,223, an increase of 7.3% and 84 applicants.
- Overall applications from the Britain and Northern Ireland make up 3.3% of all applications in 2013, the same percentage as in 2012.

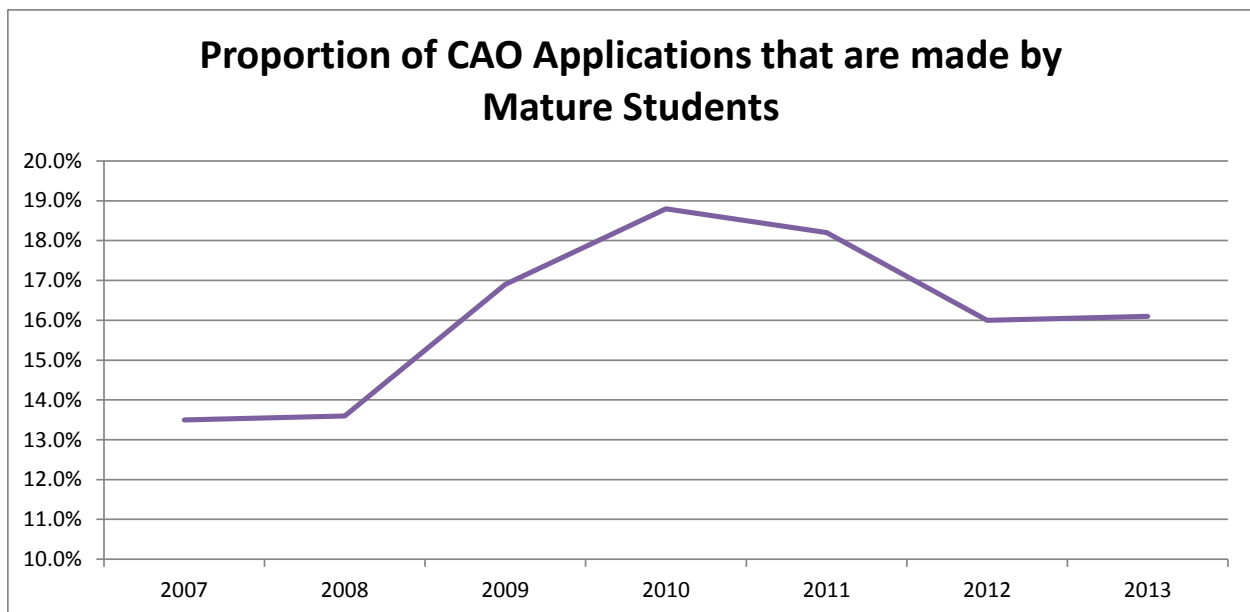
5. Mature (23+) CAO Applicants

Table 6 outlines the proportion of CAO Applicants that are mature (23 on or before 1 January on year of application).

Table 6: Mature Applicants 2007-2013

Year	Proportion of CAO Applications that are made by Mature Students
2007	13.5%
2008	13.6%
2009	16.9%
2010	18.8%
2011	18.2%
2012	16.0%
2013	16.1%

Figure 1: Mature Applicants to CAO (23+) 2007-2013



- The number of mature applicants applying to higher education institutions through the CAO system has declined overall in the last three years from 18.8% in 2010 to 16.1%. This is possibly due to the increase in Labour Market Activation courses that have entry routes outside the CAO.

6. Second and Third Preference Applications

Table 7: Level 8 Second and Third Preference Application by Discipline 2013

Discipline	1st Preference applications	2nd Preference applications	3rd Preference applications
Engineering	2,813 (4.6%)	2,418 (4.6%)	2,186 (4.7%)
Construction	1,035 (1.7%)	905 (1.7%)	750 (1.6%)
Computing	4,022 (6.6%)	3,610 (6.9%)	3,173 (6.8%)
Science	4,570 (7.5%)	4,641 (8.9%)	4,405 (9.5%)
Total Technology	12,440 (20.5%)	11,574 (22.1%)	10,514 (22.6%)
Agriculture and Veterinary	1,848 (3.0%)	912 (1.7%)	601 (1.3%)
Nursing	5,807 (9.6%)	5,571(10.6%)	5,137 (11.1%)
Medicine	3,480 (5.7%)	3,150 (6.0%)	2,857 (6.2%)
Dentistry	287 (0.5%)	185 (0.4%)	33 (0.1%)
Other Healthcare	4,415 (7.3%)	3,478 (6.6%)	3,113 (6.7%)
Arts and Humanities	14,453 (23.8%)	12,414 (23.7%)	11,096 (23.9%)
Education	5,558 (9.2%)	4,490 (8.6%)	3,622 (7.8%)
Business and Law	8,432 (13.9%)	7,650 (14.6%)	6,988 (15.0%)
Social Services	2,033 (3.3%)	1,572 (3.0%)	1,340 (2.9%)
Services	1,986 (3.3%)	1,442 (2.7%)	1,153 (2.5%)
Total	60,739 (100.0%)	52,438 (100.0%)	46,454 (100.0%)

- At level 8, there were 52,438 second preferences and 46,454 third preferences made in 2013, compared with 60,739 first preferences.
- There were more second preference applications to Science than there were first preferences at level 8.
- Significant second preference applications were made in the areas of Nursing, Medicine and Business and Law.
- Agriculture and Veterinary was the least popular second choice, with half the number of second preference applications as first preferences. Dentistry made the least popular third choice.

Table 8: Level 7/6 Second and Third Preference Application by Discipline 2013

Discipline	1st Preference applications	2nd Preference applications	3rd Preference applications
Engineering	3,758 (10.0%)	3,072 (10.7%)	2,466 (11.3%)
Construction	1,198 (3.2%)	1,019 (3.6%)	929 (4.2%)
Computing	3,492 (9.3%)	2,822 (9.9%)	2,193 (10.0%)
Science	4,202 (11.2%)	3,534 (12.3%)	2,830 (12.9%)
Total Technology	12,650 (33.8%)	10,447 (36.5%)	8,418 (38.4%)
Agriculture and Veterinary	2,290 (6.1%)	1,499 (5.2%)	1,096 (5.0%)
Other Healthcare	2,658 (7.1%)	1,585 (5.5%)	1,117 (5.1%)
Arts and Humanities	3,489 (9.3%)	2,211(7.7%)	1,547 (7.1%)
Education	1,474 (3.9%)	883 (3.1%)	581 (2.7%)
Business and Law	5,966 (16.0%)	5,057 (17.7%)	3,864 (17.6%)
Social Services	3,158 (8.4%)	2,245 (7.8%)	1,457 (6.7%)
Services	5,714 (15.3%)	4,712 (16.5%)	3,818 (17.4%)
Total	37,399 (100.0%)	28,639 (100.0%)	21,898 (100.0%)

- At level 7/6, there were 28,639 second preferences and 21,898 third preferences made in 2013, compared with 37,399 first preferences.
- Significant second preference applications were made in the areas of Construction, Business and Law and Science.
- Other Healthcare and Education were the least popular second choices, with 60% the number of second preference applications as first preferences.

Key Points 2013

CAO applicants showed a slight decrease in 2013 with 71,151 applicants, a decrease of 0.7% from 2012.

First preference applications to level 8 courses decreased by 1.8% from 2012 to 2013, with 60,739 applications.

Following a period of increase between 2008 and 2010, the number of first preference applications to level 7/6 courses has continued to decrease in 2013, with 37,399 applications, a decrease of 6.9% over 2012.

Computing, Engineering and Science continued to increase their shares of first preference applications at both level 8 and level 7/6.

Agriculture and Veterinary first preference applications remained static at level 8 but decreased by 4.8% at level 7/6.

Arts and Humanities first preference applications decreased at both levels in 2013, with more significant decreases at level 7/6.

Decreases in first preference applications continued for Construction courses at both levels in 2013.

Business and Law applications decreased at both levels continuing declines in previous years.

The number of applications from the UK to Irish institutions decreased from 1,291 in 2012 to 1,159 in 2013, a decrease of 10.2%. Applications from Northern Ireland applicants showed an increase from 1,139 in 2012 to 1,223, an increase of 84. Overall applications from the UK and Northern Ireland make up 3.3% of all applications in 2013, the same percentage as in 2012.

Mature applications decreased in 2013, continuing a trend from 2010. This decline has coincided with the creation of substantial opportunities for access to higher education through Springboard and ICT Skills Conversion programmes, which do not currently operate through the CAO application facility.

The composition of the various disciplines is as follows:

Construction: Civil Engineering, Construction studies, Architecture, Estate Agency, Valuation, Planning.

Engineering: Electrical, Electronic, Food, Agriculture, Mechanical, Chemical, Computing and Process engineering and all other engineering including Energy.

Computing: Computer Science, Information Technology, Software Development, Programming, Computer Games Development, Business Information Systems.

Science (non-healthcare): Biology, Biotechnology, Chemistry, Pharmaceutical Science, Physics, Astronomy, Mathematics, Forensics, Analytical Science.

Healthcare: Therapies, Biomedical Science, Radiography.

Arts and Humanities: Languages, Social Sciences, Arts, Cultural Studies etc.

Business and Law: Finance, Business Studies, Marketing, Law.

Services: Tourism, Hotel and Catering, Culinary, Bar Management, Event Management, Health and Safety.