

3 September, 2015

Minister O’Sullivan launches new CAO points scale

The Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O’Sullivan TD, today launched a new CAO points scale which will be used for entry to higher education from 2017.

Announcing the changes, Minister O’Sullivan said, “In April I announced a package of ambitious reforms designed to better support students transitioning from second level to higher education, including a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate to be used from 2017. The new progressive points system which I’m announcing today is a vital element of those reforms.”

The main features of the new scale, which was developed collaboratively by the universities and institutes of technology, are that:

- it maintains the current alignment between the points awarded for achievement at Higher Level and the points awarded for achievement at Ordinary Level;
- the difference in the points awarded for each grade varies, reducing the probability that students will achieve the same overall points score. This will help to minimise the allocation of places in higher education by random selection;
- it will encourage the take-up of Higher Level subjects through the introduction of points for the new H7 grade.
- it continues to award Bonus Points for Higher Level Maths.

The Minister said: “The new grading system and points scale will apply to students who have entered 5th Year this week and who will sit the Leaving Certificate in 2017. Together, these reforms will help to reduce the pressure on students at exam time and enable them to have a broader and more-rounded learning experience in their Senior Cycle.

“The new scale has been designed to minimise random selection for third level entry, which can be a source of huge frustration for students and their families. It will also reward students who aim higher, both where they take the risk of sitting a higher level paper and for succeeding in those papers to a high standard.

“I would like to thank both the university and institute of technology sectors for the very detailed work which has gone into the design of the new common points system.”

Welcoming the announcement, Irish Universities Association Chair, Professor Andrew Deeks said: “Having worked closely with the Department of Education and Skills and other stakeholders in the preparation of these, the universities support the changes which will be introduced in 2017. We expect that the broader Leaving Certificate grade bands will reduce pressure on students, allow for greater flexibility, variety and innovation in Leaving Certificate assessments, with a greater focus on the achievement of broader learning objectives.

“The revised common points scale, while maintaining the current relative alignment between higher level and ordinary level, should minimise the use of random selection in the admissions process and encourage students to take the higher level curricula.”

Professor Ciaran O’Cathain, Chairman of Institutes of Technology Ireland said “The Institutes of Technology are pleased to confirm the introduction of a new Common Points scale in 2017, which has been agreed by the institutes and our colleagues in the university sector. We believe that the new scale will accurately and fairly reflect the achievement of students undertaking the Leaving Certificate examinations under the new, broader grading system announced by the Minister.

Together, these changes will contribute towards easing the pressure experienced by students under the current system, and towards improving their overall learning experience. They will also ensure that due recognition is given to a broad range of second level learning achievement, and encourage and promote wide participation in higher education amongst the student body commencing senior cycle studies this September.”

ENDS.

Notes for Editors

In April, Minister O’Sullivan announced a new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate from 2017 as part of an overall package of reforms designed to support students in the transition from second-level to higher education. The new grading scheme will apply to students commencing the Senior Cycle in September 2015 and will reduce the current number of grade levels as follows:

New Grades	% Marks
H1 / O1	90-100
H2 / O2	80<90
H3 / O3	70<80
H4 / O4	60<70
H5 / O5	50<60
H6 / O6	40<50
H7 / O7	30<40
H8 / O8	0<30

The change in grading scheme means the Common Points Scale (CPS), used by the CAO to determine entry into higher education institutions, also needs to be revised. The table below shows the revised CPS that will be introduced from 2017:

Higher		Ordinary	
Grade	Points	Grade	Points
H1	100		
H2	88		
H3	77		
H4	66		
H5	56	O1	56
H6	46	O2	46
H7	37	O3	37
H8	0	O4	28

		O5	20
		O6	12
		O7	0
		O8	0

The points awarded for achievement in both the **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** and **QQI-FET** (formerly FETAC) awards are also being revised to maintain the current equivalences.

From 2017 **Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)** grades will be aligned as follows:

LCVP Grade	Current Points	Revised LCVP Points
Distinction	70	66
Merit	50	46
Pass	30	28

For **QQI-FET awards** the maximum possible total score of 360 (120 credits x 3 for a distinction) is currently multiplied by 10 and divided by 9 to give a maximum overall points score of 400.

From 2017, this maximum possible total score of 360 will be multiplied by 13 and divided by 12, to give a revised maximum overall points score of 390 for applicants from further education and training.

Students who sat the **Leaving Certificate before 2017** will be awarded revised points as set out in the tables below. In line with the decision to award points to students who achieve a grade of H7 under the new Leaving Certificate grading scheme, students who achieved an E grade (25-39%) at Higher Level under the earlier grading schemes will from 2017 be awarded 33 points.

The points available under the new scale cannot be directly compared with the points awarded currently. An entirely new scale is being introduced from 2017 and all students applying through the CAO from 2017 will be awarded the new points, no matter when they sat the Leaving Certificate. This means that all students applying through the CAO will be on a level playing-field.

The points which will be awarded to students who sat the Leaving Certificate from 1992-2016 are as follows:

Current (pre-2017) Leaving Certificate Grade Scheme	New Leaving Certificate Grade Scheme	New Points Higher level	New Points Ordinary level
A1	H1 / O1	100	56
A2	H2 / O2	88	46
B1			
B2	H3 / O3	77	37
B3			
C1	H4 / O4	66	28
C2			
C3	H5 / O5	56	20
D1			
D2	H6 / O6	46	12
D3			
E		33	0

Pre-1992 Leaving Certificate students will from 2017 be awarded points as follows:

Pre-1992 LC Grade	%	Current Points Higher Level	Current Points Ordinary Level	New LC Grade Equivalent	New Points Higher Level	New Points Ordinary Level
A	85-100	95	55	H1 / O1	100	56
B	70 – 84.9	80	40	H3 / O3	77	37
C	55 – 69.9	65	25	H4 / O4	66	28
D	40 – 54.9	50	10	H6 / O6	46	12
E	25 – 39.9	0	0		33	0
F	10 – 24.9					
NG	<10					

From 2017, the universities and Institutes of Technology will also introduce new **basic matriculation requirements** to take account of the new grade scheme –

- Where the requirements are currently 2 higher level C3 grades and 4 ordinary level D3 grades, in 2017 these will become 2 H5 and 4 O6/H7 grades.
- Where the requirements are currently 5 ordinary level D3 grades, in 2017 these will become 5 O6/H7 grades.

- Where the requirements are currently 3 higher level C3 grades and 3 ordinary level D3 grades, in 2017 these will become 3 H5 and 3 O6/H7 grades.

Subject requirements which form part of basic matriculation remain unchanged. Any revised subject requirements specific to individual courses for 2017 will be approved and published by each HEI over the coming period.”

Full details of the measures coming into effect in 2017 as part of the Transition Reform programme can be found on www.transition.ie