



IMPORTANT CHANGES TO DARE



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Background

DARE was established over a decade ago as a response to the under-representation of students with disabilities in higher education. From modest beginnings, the scheme has seen application numbers grow to over 4,000 in 2015. The success of the scheme has been due in no small part to the commitment and support of guidance counsellors, learning support staff, principals and parents who have worked tirelessly to ensure that young people with disabilities reach their full educational potential. The students who have progressed to higher education with the assistance of DARE have made wonderful contributions to their college communities and have enriched all aspects of campus life.

In 2012, the colleges and universities participating in DARE commissioned an evaluation of the scheme. One of the key questions which the evaluation sought to answer was 'To what extent is DARE meeting the needs of the students it wishes to serve?'. The subsequent evaluation report (An Evaluation of the HEAR and DARE Supplementary Admission Routes to Higher Education, 2013) made a number of recommendations.

In 2014, a project team, endorsed by senior management in the DARE colleges and universities was tasked to work with stakeholders across the education sector to address the issues identified in the evaluation report. They engaged in a lengthy and lively consultation process, with upwards of 50 roundtable meetings, 600 individuals and 40 organisations. The purpose of this process was to examine the conclusions of the evaluation and develop proposals for changes that could be made to DARE to address existing challenges.

The Changes

Based on the findings of the evaluation and consultation process, the college and universities participating in DARE agreed the following broad changes to the scheme:

1. DARE is now defined as a third level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers whose **disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education**. This recognises that not all students with disabilities are necessarily educationally impacted as a result of having a disability.
2. New DARE eligibility criteria were devised with the aim of being more holistic by including the impact that disability has on individual educational outcomes. In order to compete for a reduced points place, applicants must provide **evidence of the impact** of their disability on their second level education.

3. DARE will **broaden the avenues available to students to provide evidence of their disabilities so that it is easier and more affordable to do so**. The process highlighted that a significant number of potential applicants were being excluded from consideration under DARE as they could not afford or access the required evidence of disability documentation.
4. DARE and HEAR colleges and universities will **prioritise students for consideration of reduced points offers** who are:
 - (i) Eligible for **both DARE and HEAR**. This is to address the acute obstacles faced by students with disabilities from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds – i.e. those facing the ‘double disadvantage’ of poverty and disability.
 - (ii) Eligible DARE applicants with **physical and sensory disabilities**. This is to help address that students with physical and sensory disabilities were identified as being particularly under-represented in higher education.

Changes for the 2016 CAO Application Cycle

Introduction of new DARE eligibility Criteria:

Meeting
Evidence of
Disability
Criteria



Meeting
Educational
Impact
Criteria



DARE
Eligibility

Applicants must meet a combination of educational impact indicators and the evidence of disability criteria to be eligible for DARE.

Educational Impact Statement

Determining the educational impact of a disability on an applicant will be done through the use of a new **DARE Educational Impact Statement (EIS)**. The EIS is made up of two parts; the School Statement which is completed by the appropriate staff in school and the Applicant Statement, which is completed by the applicant.

Evidencing Disability

Where an applicant has difficulty accessing the appropriate professional to complete the Section C Evidence of Disability, their **General Practitioner (GP) may in certain circumstances be in a position to complete the form**. A GP may do this when they have information on a clear diagnosis on file from the appropriate professional and this was received within the given timeframe if a time limit applies. This measure does not apply to applicants who are requested to provide a full psycho-educational assessment report i.e. applicants with a specific learning difficulty or DCD.

Prioritising offers to the most Under-represented Groups

DARE and HEAR colleges and universities will prioritise applicants eligible for **both DARE and HEAR** and also eligible DARE applicants who have a **physical or sensory** disability when making reduced points offers.

Changes for the 2017 CAO Application Cycle

From 2017 onwards DARE will **no longer require a full psycho-educational report dated within the previous three years** of application for students applying on the basis of a specific learning difficulty (SLD).

Details of the new DARE requirements for SLD applicants will be circulated in early 2016.

A Word of Thanks

We would like to thank all the representatives from the second level sector, disability organisations, non-profit groups, state agencies, colleges and universities and the DARE advisory boards who contributed their time and expertise so generously throughout the consultation process. A special thank you to the students who engaged with us.