

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s)

A lot of work has been happening in the 6th year Guidance sphere in the last number of months and I just wanted to take this opportunity to inform you about what has happened to date and make you aware of some of the things to look out for in the coming months, so that you are best placed to support your son/daughter. Every student has a different plan and is at a different stage, so my emphasis is to provide them with the resources they need to research their best options and offer encouragement, guidance and help.

Guidance Terminology

There has been a recap on important Guidance terms including the points system, entry requirements for courses and the national framework of qualifications.

Upcoming Guidance events awareness

Students have been encouraged to subscribe to guidance newsletters so that they are aware of what is happening in the Guidance sphere that might be relevant to them. In particular

- <https://careersnews.ie/>
- classroom Guidance – what’s on this week - <https://classroomguidance.ie/careers-news/>
- synergycareers free webinars every Monday - <https://www.synergycareers.ie/>

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships are a popular option with many of our students and this term we have had Elaine from MSLETB in to the school to speak with students about apprenticeship opportunities. Should student have any further questions, she can be contacted at <https://msletb.ie/further-education-and-training-fet/information-on-our-courses/apprenticeships/> and is very willing to guide students in the right direction. The website www.apprenticeship.ie is also a fantastic resource for students to get further information in this area.

Further Education (FE/PLC courses) incl. Tertiary courses

Many students are considering options in the Further Education (PLC) area and these courses are a fantastic opportunity to check if a career or study area might be of interest before committing to a three or four year degree. They can also be used as a means of accessing Higher Education outside of the Leaving cert. The biggest FE colleges in this region are Sligo college of Further Education (<https://sligocfe.ie/>) and North Connacht College (<https://northconnaughtcollege.ie/>). Applications for places on FE courses will be opening in the New Year and I would encourage all students to apply for an FE course as an option.

The announcement by the minister for Higher and Further Education Simon Harris of the introduction of more tertiary course opportunities for students provides more opportunities for students who wish to access higher education outside of the tradition CAO process. Participants spend the first year or two in an FE college and transfer automatically to the higher-education institution to complete the programme.

Guest Speakers, Open Days and College Awareness Week

We have had a number of Guest speakers visit the school over the last few months including

- Jacqueline Mellet – ATU Sligo
- Elaine – MSLETB (talk on apprenticeships)
- Victoria Wilson – ATU Donegal who visited during College Awareness Week
- Danny Little - Galway University

We also attended ATU Sligo’s open day on 17th November, and students are consistently encouraged to keep up-to-date with upcoming open days and attend them if they are interested in applying to a particular College/University.

CAO Application

A vast majority of our 6th year students apply to CAO for college places and the application window to do so is now open. Students have been shown a demo application of how to apply and should they have any questions, have been encouraged to speak with me for help. The deadline for making the discounted application is 20th January 2024. There is a wealth of information on the application process on www.CAO.ie along with other important information and updates. Courses can be added for free up to 1st February and again from 6th May-1st July at 5pm. Students must ensure though that restricted courses appear on their application before 1st February.

CAO Webinars

CAO plan to run an Information Evening for Parents and Students online on **January 17 at 6pm**. Numbers will be limited at the live event, however, a recording will be made available after the event for those who are unable to register – please check the cao.ie/webinar page in January for more information on this upcoming online information session.

College Access Schemes – HEAR/DARE

Students applying for either or both of these schemes must indicate this on their CAO application form before 1st February. More information on these schemes can be found at www.accesscollege.ie

- The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is a higher education admissions scheme for Leaving Certificate students (under 23) whose economic or social background are underrepresented in higher education.
- DARE is a third level alternative admissions scheme for school-leavers under the age of 23 as of 1 January 2024 whose disabilities have had a negative impact on their second level education. Students applying to DARE should let me know as soon as possible so that I can assist them with their Educational Impact Statement.

There is an **online information day on both the HEAR and DARE schemes being held on Saturday 13th January 2024**. Check accesscollege.ie for further details closer to the event.

Some colleges choose not to partake in either of these access schemes but run their own scheme instead.

Exemptions

Students who have an exemption from Irish or another language should notify the college to which they are applying of the exemption. The exemptions application process for the NUI colleges (Galway, Maynooth, UCD and UCC) has gone fully digital this year. The link for the NUI colleges to apply for the exemption this is <https://exemptions.nui.ie/>

UCAS Application

Students interested in making a UCAS application should have begun the process at this stage and there are some who have made their application and are now awaiting processing and offers. However if there are any students who are still interested in applying to the UK colleges, the deadline for applying is 31st January 2024. It is a busy application so students are encouraged to apply well in advance of this date.

Parents Evening

We held a very successful and informative parents evening in collaboration with some of the other Sligo schools in the ATU Sligo on Wednesday 22nd November. If you were unable to attend but have any questions to ask me, you can contact the school and I will reply to you.

One-to-one meetings

One to one meetings are continuing with students on a needs basis and if a student would like a chat or have questions about anything, they are encouraged to contact me on TEAMS, by email or just call down to my office at any stage.

Study support

All students have a school subscription to StudyClix to help them prepare for their upcoming exams. Please encourage them to use this fantastic resource to support their studies.

New Year Activities

In the New Year we will be continuing our guidance work with a focus on

- College Accommodation – students will be made aware of where to access information on campus accommodation applications
- Student Finance including the student grant (SUSI)
- Applying for scholarships
- Gap year
- Job search
- CAO offers stage
- Transition to college
- CV review – (CV's are completed in the LCVP class)

So as you can see there is a lot of work done to date and a lot to continue in the New Year. Thank you for all your support over the past number of months and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions. I would also appreciate if you could take time to complete the attached survey before Friday 22nd December 2023 to help inform the guidance plan going forward <https://forms.gle/gGuFX1umJwFc7DKN6>

May I take this opportunity to wish you a very happy Christmas and a happy peaceful 2024.

Kind Regards

Fiona McNamee

6th year Guidance Teacher.