

Information regarding the new Leaving Certificate grading scale and the new Common Points Scale for entry into Higher Education

The Leaving Certificate Examination and the Common Points Scale in 2017 differ in two ways from previous years.

Change 1:

The Department of Education and Skills has changed the Leaving Certificate grading scale. The new grading scale has 8 grade bands, 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

Change 2:

The Common Points Scale used by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to determine entry has been revised following the new LC grading scale. The table below shows the revised Common Points Scale that will be used from 2017:

Higher Level			Ordinary Level		
New Grades	% Marks	New Points Awarded	New Grades	% Marks	New Points Awarded
H1	90 – 100	100			
H2	80 < 90	88			
H3	70 < 80	77			
H4	60 < 70	66			
H5	50 < 60	56	O1	90 – 100	56
H6	40 < 50	46	O2	80 < 90	46
H7	30 < 40	37	O3	70 < 80	37
H8	0 < 30	0	O4	60 < 70	28
			O5	50 < 60	20
			O6	40 < 50	12
			O7	30 < 40	0
			O8	0 < 30	0

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THESE CHANGES

Firstly, it is very important to note that **all applicants in 2017, including those applying on the basis of a previous year's LC results,** will be scored by the same criteria. All candidates will therefore be competing on a level playing field and will be affected equally by these changes.

The best advice that can be offered to students is to concentrate on your senior cycle studies, to try to do your best in the Leaving Certificate examinations, and to apply for college courses that you are genuinely interested in.

Q. How are my points calculated for the purposes of my CAO Application?

A. The six best scores, in recognised subjects, in one Leaving Certificate Examination will be counted for points computation. If you receive a H6 grade or higher in Higher Level Mathematics, you add 25 bonus points to the points for the grade you achieved in Mathematics, then identify your best six scores. The bonus points are included in the overall points calculation only when Mathematics is one of the applicant's best six scores following the addition of the bonus.

Q. What is the position in relation to minimum course Entry Requirements?

A. Courses have minimum entry requirements and you must first meet the minimum entry requirements in order to be considered for entry to a course. Detailed information in relation to specific course requirements for each course is available on the website of each Higher Education Institution.

Q. If I repeat the Leaving Certificate examination in 2017 and achieve fewer points than I did in a previous sitting, can I use the best of the two sets of results for entry to higher education in 2017?

A. Only one sitting of the Leaving Certificate can be used for points computation purposes. All sittings will be calculated using the new Common Points Scale – the best set will be used.

Q. I achieved a Higher Level Grade E in 2016 (or an earlier sitting). Can I use this for matriculation in 2017?

A. Yes, from 2017 a grade HE will contribute to the new basic matriculation requirements which the universities and institutes of technology have introduced to take account of the new grading scheme. These basic matriculation requirements for 2017 applicants and the grades required from pre-2017 applicants are detailed in the Table below:

2017 Matriculation requirements	Pre 2017 Leaving Cert grades required
2 H5 and 4 O6/H7 grades	2 HD1 and 4 OD3/H E grades
5 O6/H7 grades	5 OD3/H E grades
3 H5 and 3 O6/H7 grades	3 HD1 and 3 OD3/H E grades

Q. I sat the Leaving Certificate in 2016 and failed to meet the matriculation requirements for my chosen course/institution, but in 2017, I meet the new matriculation requirements. If I re-apply in 2017, how will I be assessed?

A. All students applying through the CAO from 2017 will be awarded points under the new scale, no matter when they sat the Leaving Certificate. If they meet the matriculation and course-specific minimum entry requirements, a points score will be calculated using the new Common Points Scale and the applicant will compete on that basis. Please note that the old H E grade will be awarded 33 points under the new system.

Q. I sat the Leaving Certificate in 2016 (or previously) and I met the course specific entry requirements for that year. Will I automatically meet the course specific entry requirements in 2017?

A. No, not automatically. The specific entry requirements for most courses have not changed, so if you met the requirements in 2016 or previously, you will meet the requirements for 2017 entry. However, in some cases the course specific entry requirements have changed upwards, in which case you may not meet the requirement in 2017. For instance, a HC3 Mathematics (55 < 60%) which met the specific entry requirements for Level 8 Honours Engineering degrees in 2016 will not meet the H4 (60 < 70%) Mathematics requirement that will apply in some institutions from 2017. In this instance, you would need to take Mathematics again in the 2017 Leaving Certificate to improve your grade to a H4 or better. You should check carefully the matriculation and course specific requirements for each course you are considering applying to in 2017.

Q. How will the introduction of the new grading scale and common points scale affect a student who wishes to use the Leaving Certificate results from a previous year to study abroad in 2017?

A. The new Irish grading scheme has been fully communicated to the UK and other EU systems and is reflected in the revised (entry 2017) UK UCAS Tariff tables (see <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017> and p.112 of the pdf document, "New Tariff tables May 2016 advisers", which can be downloaded from this webpage). As can be seen from this document, a very clear mechanism is in place to ensure parity for those applying with Irish Leaving Certificate results from 2017 or from previous years.

Q. How do these changes affect the scoring for QQI-FET awards?

A. From 2017, the 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 presenting QQI

further education and training awards. For further information about how points are calculated for QQI-FET applicants please visit the Applicant Scoring page in the 'Student Resources' section of www.cao.ie

Q. How do the changes impact the treatment of the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)?

A. With the introduction of the new Leaving Certificate grading scale and the new Common Points Scale for entry into Higher Education from 2017, points will be awarded for LCVP Link modules as follows:

LCVP Grade	Revised LCVP Points
Distinction	66
Merit	46
Pass	28

Q. How many points will be awarded for Foundation Level Mathematics?

A. With the advent of the new Common Points Scale for entry into Higher Education from 2017, the following points will be allocated to particular grades for Foundation Level Mathematics. Points for Foundation level Mathematics will be awarded by certain institutions only for the purposes of admission to higher education – applicants should refer to the literature available from each HEI for full details.

Foundation Level Maths 1992-2016	2017+	Points
A1	F1	20
A2 / B1	F2	12

Q. What are the Main Features of the new Common Points Scale?

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

1. It fairly rewards scholastic achievement;
2. It preserves the relative value of Ordinary Level and Higher Level in the common points scale;
3. It encourages the take-up of Higher Level subjects by awarding points for the new H7 grade and reckoning a H7 for matriculation purposes where appropriate;
4. These policy changes will encourage higher level learning by fairly rewarding those that take the opportunity to study higher level subjects;
5. It minimises the use of random selection in the allocation of higher education places. As the difference in the points awarded for each grade varies, this reduces the probability that students will achieve the same overall points score;
6. It continues to award 25 Bonus Points for Higher Level Mathematics for H6 Grades and above.

Q. Why was the grading system changed?

A. The new grading bands are designed to improve the learning experience of students. They will allow for the focus of learning in the Leaving Certificate to change as broader grade bands will ease the pressure on students to achieve marginal gains in examinations, and encourage more substantial engagement with each subject.

Q. Is the new points system equitable in awarding the same points for a broader range of marks?

A. The new points system has been specifically designed to fairly reward scholastic achievement. Very extensive and detailed modelling and testing has been conducted by the higher education institutions, with the assistance of both the CAO and other technical experts, to ensure that the revised scale is fair and equitable to all students.

Q. Can I estimate the possible points required for 2017 entry?

A. The points cut-off in any given year will depend on:

- the volume of applications for that year;
- the number of places the college can accommodate; and
- the examination performance of the applicants in that year.

The points naturally fluctuate from year to year because of the volume of applications, and because the number of places may differ. Students should avoid drawing direct comparison between 2016 points and 2017 points.

Q. Will I end up with lower points due to the changes being introduced?

A. Given the non-linear design and other features of the new points scale, a simple comparison of a candidate's points score under the new scale with the pre-2017 points scale will not be possible. Students will, on average, receive slightly less points in 2017 than under the old system. However, all students applying through the CAO from 2017 will be awarded points under the new scale, no matter when they sat the Leaving Certificate. Accordingly, all candidates will be scored by the same criteria and will be competing on a level playing field.

Further information is also available on the website www.transition.ie