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IMPORTANT CHANGES TO DARE 2017

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Other useful information

Improved information for applicants on the allocation of DARE & HEAR reduced points places

Information on the number of reduced points places available on each course and the method used for selecting eligible DARE or HEAR students for those places has been published by a number of college/universities on their websites. To aid access to this information, where it is available, links have been introduced to it on www.accesscollege.ie. See the participating colleges section.

Support for Schools

A dedicated DARE HEAR school support email address has been set up to respond to any queries you have that are not covered in the DARE HEAR publications or on www.accesscollege.ie. Schools can email: dhschoolsupport@iua.ie

A Word of Thanks

We would like to thank our school partners for your commitment and patience in working with DARE in what was a challenging year given the significant changes to the criteria and requirements. As a direct result of your hard work in promoting DARE and supporting your students through the DARE application process, many more applicants applied, were deemed eligible and are now fulfilling their dreams and potential.

We would also like to thank all the Guidance Counsellors and Learning Support Teachers who participated in the evaluation of the new Educational Impact Statement. Your feedback was very valuable. We have endeavoured to incorporate as much of it as possible in the EIS for 2017. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important equity of access initiative in 2017.

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Evidencing Disability:

Specific Learning Difficulty (SLD)

DARE no longer requires a full psycho-educational report dated within the previous three years of application for students applying on the basis of an SLD (Dyslexia or Dyscalculia).

- Applicants are required to submit a full psychological assessment report **of any age** in which a diagnosis of an SLD is clearly outlined.
- Applicants will be required to submit attainment scores, either from school-based testing or from testing administered by a suitably qualified psychologist, which have been carried out on or after **1 February 2015**.
- As with all other disability categories, a completed EIS must be included in the application to DARE.

Development Coordination Disorder (DCD)

Applicants to DARE with DCD – Dyspraxia or Dysgraphia are no longer required to submit a full psycho-educational report dated within the previous three years of application.

- A psycho-educational report **of any age** is required.
- A report **of any age** from an Occupational Therapist/ Physiotherapist/ Neurologist is still a requirement.
- As with all other disability categories, a completed EIS must be included in the application to DARE.

General Practitioners completing the Section C Evidence of Disability

- Applicants who have an existing diagnosis but have difficulty accessing the appropriate professional to get confirmation of the diagnosis or an updated report may, similar to last year, ask their general practitioner (GP) to complete the Section C Evidence of Disability form, if the GP has the relevant information on file.
- To ensure consistency for all applicants to DARE, the Section C (if completed by a GP) must be accompanied by a copy of a document from the applicant's file in which the diagnosis is confirmed by the DARE appropriate professional.

Background

DARE was established over a decade ago as a response to the under-representation of students with disabilities in higher education. Over this time, 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 order to ensure that DARE was fully meeting the needs of the students it wishes to serve an evaluation report was commissioned by the DARE participating colleges in 2012 (*An Evaluation of the HEAR and DARE Supplementary Admission Routes to Higher Education, 2013*). As a result of the findings of this report, DARE initiated the establishment of a project team, whose task it was to work with stakeholders across the education sector to address the issues identified in the evaluation report. On foot of the consultation, the college and universities participating in DARE agreed broad changes to the scheme that were to be introduced over two years, 2016 and 2017.

The changes introduced in 2016 were:

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 now, through the Educational Impact Statement (EIS), provide evidence of the educational impact of their disability on their second level education.
3. DARE broadened the avenues available to students to provide evidence of their disabilities to make the process easier and more affordable. This was done by introducing a GP verification process, which allowed applicants to get confirmation of their diagnosis from their GP and cut down on the costs associated with getting this information from their consultant/ specialist.
4. DARE and HEAR colleges and universities prioritised students for consideration of reduced points offers to students who are particularly underrepresented in higher education:
 - (i) Applicants eligible for both DARE and HEAR.
 - (ii) Eligible DARE applicants with physical and sensory disabilities.

Initial Results of the 2016 Changes

While a full evaluation of the implementation of the new DARE criteria has yet to be completed, early indications show that the implementation of the changes have yielded positive results:

- There was close to a 20% increase in applications to DARE from 2015.
- There was a 25% increase in eligible applications from 2015, which shows the positive effect of the communications of the new criteria in targeting applicants who were educationally impacted as a result of a disability.
- There was a significant increase in the number of applicants who were eligible for both DARE and HEAR in 2016 i.e. those facing the 'double disadvantage' of poverty and disability and these applicants were prioritised by the participating HEIs for consideration of reduced points place.
- An evaluation of the Educational Impact indicators was undertaken following completion of DARE assessment for eligibility. Initial findings support the validity of the EIS in assessing the educational impact of disability.

The success of the measures has been due in no small part to the commitment and support of our School partners, who have worked to ensure that young people with disabilities reach their full educational potential.

Introducing the Changes for 2017

This year is the second and final year of the implementation of changes to DARE as a result of the evaluation and consultation process. These changes are aimed at making it easier and more affordable for applicants with a Specific Learning Difficulty or Developmental Co-ordination Disorder to provide evidence of their disability. Improvements for 2017 to the DARE Educational Impact Statement have also been made based on from the feedback provided from schools and the learning from year one. Every effort has been made to address concerns highlighted in feedback from schools, including the amount of time the form took to complete and challenges experienced by applicants and schools in using the interactive version.

Improvements and changes to the EIS

EIS Checklist

Applicants are no longer required to fill out an Applicant Statement on the EIS.

- An EIS Checklist has replaced the Applicant Statement, which the applicant and teacher completing the EIS are asked to fill out together. The purpose of the checklist is to identify which aspects of the EIS are relevant to the applicant and those that are not. This will help to expedite the process of completing the EIS.
- Applicants still have an opportunity to complete a personal statement on Section A of the online Supplementary Information Form (SIF) through their CAO application.

School Section of the EIS

The EIS has been condensed from 8 pages to 6 with the number of indicators being reduced from 7 to 6.

- The EIS is now easier for both applicants and their parents to understand and for schools to complete.
- Schools can report the results of school-based attainment testing in Section 6 of the form for applicants with a Specific Learning Difficulty once testing was carried out on or after 1 February 2015.
- Applicants who have not attended the same school for the entire duration of their post-primary education are only required to get an EIS completed by a previous school where the current school cannot capture the impact of the applicant's disability/ condition.

Teacher's Manual

A more comprehensive Teacher's Manual is available to all schools and two copies are included in the DARE HEAR School Pack.

- It gives guidance to schools on which parts of the EIS are most relevant to applicants and on how much of the form needs to be completed for the purposes of DARE eligibility.
- The Teacher's Manual now also includes a section on the HEAR Social and Cultural Indicators as a result of feedback from Guidance Counsellors who requested more information was provided on:
 - Socio-Economic Group
 - DEIS
 - Area Profile