



# Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim  
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí  
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional  
Learning of School Leaders  
and Teachers

## OIDE GUIDANCE NEWSLETTER

December 2024

Welcome to our Oide  
Guidance second  
newsletter for 2024-2025  
as we approach the  
festive season.

Key features of this newsletter  
include:

As a Guidance Team our commitment to evolving and supporting Guidance Programmes and Whole School Guidance Planning continues.

Our in-person Professional Learning Experiences titled Planning a Responsive and Effective Guidance Programme Across the Continuum of Learning have concluded. Our online delivery has begun both in English and 'as Gaeilge', and we are so grateful for the participants energy and capacity for sharing insight and collaboration that it brings.

We are thrilled to welcome **Niamh Uí Thuama our new Guidance Associate supporting the delivery of Leagan Gaeilge workshops and webinars.**

Niamh is based in Coláiste Ghobnatan, Baile Mhúirne. Niamh's appointment is a wonderful addition of support to our team and most especially for Guidance Counsellors who are based in Scoileanna Gaeltachta and Gaelcholáistí through the country

- Daniel McFarlene, Access Manager with the Irish Universities Association offers some key tips for classroom presentations for DARE/HEAR Programmes.
- With many of our students interested in Allied Healthcare, a key change for entry to Ulster University is highlighted for September 2025 entry, with applicants required to undertake MSAT Ulster.
- [Building Heroes](#) is a final feature for this edition with links to three excellent videos showing opportunities in this area. A social media campaign through the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) is aimed at dispelling myths about what a career in construction is really like.

# ADVICE FROM DANIAL MCFARLANE ACCESS MANAGER, IRISH UNIVERSITIES ASSOCIATION: SUPPORTING GUIDANCE COUNSELLORS IN DARE AND HEAR APPLICATIONS FOR 2025-26



As guidance counsellors, your support can be transformative for students navigating the DARE (Disability Access Route to Education) and HEAR (Higher Education Access Route) application processes. My lived experience of being the first in my family to progress to higher education via the HEAR scheme was thanks to the supportive guidance counsellor I had in my corner. Now, as Access Manager of the DARE and HEAR schemes, I am keen to equip guidance professionals with the tools to ensure they can help students most in need to progress to higher education via the DARE and HEAR schemes.

This newsletter provides structured guidance to help you deliver impactful classroom presentations and communicate effectively with parents and external stakeholders. Together, we can help students and families engage fully with these schemes, enhancing their access to higher education opportunities. Please see [Access College](#) for further information.

## Tips and Tricks for use in Classroom Presentations for DARE/HEAR Programmes

Engaging students early in the school year with structured presentations is essential for clarifying the DARE and HEAR application processes. Regardless of the social profile or needs present in the varied school settings, it supports inclusive practice that all students receive a full classroom presentation covering the DARE and HEAR scheme. This is to ensure that everyone receives the same information, irrespective of their assumed eligibility.

Below is a recommended structure:

### 1. Introduce Equity vs. Equality

Begin the presentation with an icebreaker to help students reflect on accessibility in higher education. Including a prompt such as, “Who thinks everyone has an equal chance to attend higher education in Ireland?” can help spark discussions about equity. This quick, two-minute activity highlights the purpose of DARE and HEAR, which aim to bridge gaps for students facing socio-economic or disability-related challenges.

### 2. Use the Access College Presentation

Utilise the official “Access College” presentation to ensure students receive a comprehensive overview of [DARE](#) and [HEAR](#). This resource provides essential information on each programme, eligibility requirements, and application steps, giving students a solid foundation to understand how these schemes support their educational goals. The link for these presentations can be found on the access college website.

### 3. Invite Former Eligible Students

Invite past students who were accepted through DARE or HEAR to share their experiences. First hand accounts can inspire and motivate current students, offering a relatable perspective on how the programmes have positively impacted lives. These alumni can serve as practical examples, helping students envision their own success.

#### **4. Shift Away from a Charitable Framing**

Present DARE and HEAR as integral to a larger societal shift towards equality, rather than as charitable initiatives. These programmes exist to create a level playing field, giving all students a fair chance to succeed in higher education.

#### **5. Highlight Campus Life and Opportunities Beyond Points**

Encourage students to think beyond Leaving Certificate points and focus on the range of opportunities available in higher education. Discuss various aspects of campus life, including job placements, study abroad programmes, scholarships, and a supportive campus community. This helps students view DARE and HEAR as gateways to a well-rounded university experience.

#### **6. Set Realistic Expectations**

While DARE and HEAR offer significant support, avoid over-promising outcomes. When a question arises and you're uncertain of the answer, model a collaborative approach: assign one task to the student (such as gathering a document) and take on one yourself. Reconvene to discuss the findings. This approach can be particularly useful when handling application details, like DARE documentation requirements.

#### **7. Empower Students to Introduce Programmes at Home**

The DARE and HEAR applications often require sensitive information, such as family income (HEAR) or details regarding disabilities (DARE). Provide students with strategies to raise these topics at home respectfully and effectively, helping them understand the long-term benefits of applying.



### **Guidelines for Communicating with Parents and External Stakeholders on the DARE/HEAR schemes**

Parental support is crucial to successful DARE or HEAR applications. When working with parents and external partners, consider these guidelines:

#### **1. Communicate Verbally with Parents & Stakeholders**

For sensitive discussions, phone conversations are often more effective than email. This approach allows parents to ask questions directly, helping them better understand the purpose and requirements of the programmes.

#### **2. Guide Parents Using the Booklet**

Provide parents with the [DARE/HEAR](#) informational booklet, which covers everything from eligibility criteria to documentation guidelines. During each call, direct parents to specific sections and encourage them to take notes with you, ensuring they feel informed and confident in supporting their child.

#### **3. Leverage School Support Networks**

Collaborate with the Home School Liaison or School Completion Officer or AEN Coordinator if they have an existing rapport with the student or family. This connection can be especially beneficial when guiding DARE/HEAR-eligible students through the application process.

#### 4. Address Common Concerns Early

Parents may have privacy concerns, particularly regarding income disclosures. Reassure them that HEAR only use financial information to assess eligibility for HEAR and do not share or use it beyond this purpose.

#### 5. Clarify the Importance of Documentation

Ensure parents understand the importance of submitting accurate documentation by the specified deadlines. This step is critical, as missed or incomplete documentation may affect a student's eligibility.

#### 6. Coordinate with Access & Disability Offices

[Your local Access and Disability Office](#) in higher education institutions can be a valuable resource. Reach out to them for guidance and additional support, they are ready to assist you and your students through the application process. Find their contact information on Access College website under [Participating Colleges](#).

#### 7. Timely Communication with external stakeholders is key

Timely communication with external offices, such as Revenue, Intreo, or medical and psychological services, is essential for acquiring necessary documentation for DARE. Set clear expectations and deadlines with these offices to prevent delays in the application process.

#### 8. Follow the DARE/HEAR Engagement Cycle

The DARE/HEAR application process has key stages throughout the school year:

- Pre-Christmas: Introduce DARE and HEAR and begin collecting documentation.
- New Year: Verify collected documentation, assist students with online applications (due 1 February), and ensure that documents are submitted well in advance of deadlines.

As guidance counsellors, your support is invaluable in helping students navigate the DARE and HEAR application process. Through effective classroom presentations and open communication with parents and stakeholders, you can ensure that students have the support they need to avail of the supports the DARE and HEAR scheme brings. By working together, we can help provide pathways to higher education for every student who qualifies, setting them up for a successful future in higher education and beyond.

Thank you for your continued dedication and commitment.



*Daniel McFarlane*

Daniel McFarlane  
Access Manager  
Irish Universities  
Association



The method of candidate selection for programmes within **Ulster University School of Health Sciences** has changed for those applying for September 2025 entry.

For September 2025 entry, applicants are required to undertake MSAT Ulster; a brand-new test hosted by ACER used to shortlist candidates for offer-making purposes.

This will apply to the following programmes:

- Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging
- Occupational Therapy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Radiotherapy and Oncology
- Speech and Language Therapy

The Admissions team announced this at the NISCA (Northern Ireland Service for Careers Advisors) Conference November 2024.

The test is expected to take place on **Saturday 8th and Sunday 9th March 2025** at their Derry Campus and Belfast Campus, although these are still to be finalised.

Applicants for the above programmes will receive preparatory materials (sample questions / information booklet) after the 29 January UCAS application deadline.

The Ulster University's Admissions team have published a [FAQ website](#) specific to the MSAT Ulster test for careers guidance advisors and prospective applicants.

The candidate selection process for those applying to the following programmes remains unchanged from the year previous:

#### Online Video Interview

Adult Nursing

Mental Health Nursing

Online Interview  
(Microsoft Teams)

Dietetics

#### In-Person Interview

Community Youth Work

Paramedic Science

Pharmacy

Social Work

Conán Meehan

Student Outreach & Recruitment

Officer Market Engagement

T: +44 (0) 28 9536 5806

E: [c.meehan@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:c.meehan@ulster.ac.uk)

**For queries about the MSAT Ulster Test, please contact:**

Nuala Quinn, Admissions Manager, Belfast Campus [n.quinn1@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:n.quinn1@ulster.ac.uk)

June Johnston, Admissions Coordinator, Belfast Campus [j.johnston@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:j.johnston@ulster.ac.uk)

**For queries about Dietetics / Pharmacy, please contact:**

Martin Smith, Admissions Manager, Coleraine Campus - Dietetics / Pharmacy [m.smith@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:m.smith@ulster.ac.uk)

**For queries about Nursing, Paramedic Science and Social Work, please contact:**

Sinead Cassley, Admissions Manager, Derry~Londonderry Campus Nursing, Paramedic Science and Social Work [s.cassley@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:s.cassley@ulster.ac.uk)

## **Building Heroes** an initiative of the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

The world of construction has changed and modernised at a rapid pace in recent years.

There are now jobs in the sector that simply didn't exist a decade ago, while Government commitments to build more homes means careers will be sustainable into the future too. However, market research carried out as part of the [Report on the Analysis of Skills for Residential Construction & Retrofitting, 2023 to 2030](#) found that perceptual barriers were stopping second-level students from pursuing careers in construction.

The report showed that students, parents and guidance counsellors can have a narrow image of the construction industry as solely confined to "on-site" work.

And there remains an impression that a job in the sector is better suited to males when, in fact, it is inclusive and accessible to everyone.

Building Heroes is a social media campaign aimed at dispelling myths about what a career in construction is really like.

We have been documenting the on the job and training stories of our Building Heroes across social media throughout 2024 and will continue to do so in 2025.

It's an exciting opportunity to see how our young people are learning to help deliver homes and buildings that will benefit society for generations to come.

We know there has been real progress made around housing in recent years. More than 33,000 houses were built in 2023, 12,000 of which were social housing.

But as we seek to build more homes, we must make sure we have more people working in the industry. If you are interested in a career in construction, there are many potential routes to your dream job.

### **Meet our Building Heroes**

You can read about our Building Heroes and their journeys [here](#).

You can follow their progress on the Building Heroes social media accounts:

[Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [TikTok](#) [LinkedIn](#)

The below videos are great resources to highlight the opportunities in this sector:

[Building Heroes, Chatreen's Story](#) (4.24 mins) - Chatreen O'Connor, who was studying Television and Digital Filmmaking before deciding to become an apprentice electrician.

[Building Heroes, Giselle's Story](#) (5.59mins) - Meet Giselle Gallagher, who was a rugby scholarship student in America studying psychology before she returned home and found a job working in off-site construction manufacturing.

[Building Heros, Liam's Story](#) (4.55mins) - Meet Liam Roche, who left school after his Junior Certificate, but is now an Architectural BIM Technologist and WorldSkills medal winner.

Thank you for your remarkable work in opening the hearts of our students to their potential. To finish we'd like to include an analogy that is so fitting in terms of our work with students.



You are holding a cup of coffee when someone comes along and bumps into you or shakes your arm, making you spill your coffee everywhere.

Why did you spill the coffee?

"Because someone bumped into me!!!"

Wrong answer.

You spilled the coffee because there was coffee in your cup.

Had there been tea in the cup, you would have spilled tea.

Whatever is inside the cup is what will spill out.

Therefore, when life comes along and shakes you (which WILL happen), whatever is inside you will come out. It's easy to fake it, until you get rattled.

So, we have to ask ourselves... "what's in my cup?"

When life gets tough, what spills over?

Joy, gratitude, peace and humility?

Anger, bitterness, victim mentality and quitting tendencies?

Life provides the cup; YOU choose how to fill it.

Today let's work towards filling our cups with gratitude, forgiveness, joy, words of affirmation, resilience, positivity, and kindness, gentleness and love for others.

~Thich Nhat Hanh~



Wishing you all a restful and restorative festive break, filled with moments that replenish your cup and prepare you to continue to inspire others to choose what may fill theirs in the year ahead. May this time be full of joy, relaxation, and all the inspiration you need to welcome 2025 with renewed energy.

For those who may be interested in applying for [School Support](#) from the Oide Guidance Team please link with your school management to process an application.

Should you have any questions or need further information, feel free to contact us at [info@oide.ie](mailto:info@oide.ie)

Beannachtai,  
Oide's Guidance Team



Oide

Tacú leis an bhFoghlaim  
Ghairmiúil i measc Ceannairí  
Scoile agus Múinteoirí

Supporting the Professional  
Learning of School Leaders  
and Teachers

