

13 Colleges expect spike in random selection

High-points courses in health, law, pharmacy and science most likely to be affected

>> A system of lottery entry for equal-scoring candidates has been in place in Ireland since 2009. It seems that this year's exceptional circumstances (Covid) has led to a 'spike' in its use.

>>Perhaps the headline should have read:

>>"For those scoring equally high points, despite (a Covid-related) spike in top scores, the random selection (a lottery) will sort out who wins a place"

The article continues.....

Universities fear they will have to restrict entry to more high-points courses on the basis of "random selection" this year due to record-breaking Leaving Cert results.

Results this year climbed to a new high with a sharp increase in the number of students securing top H1 grades.

Senior university sources expect they will have to introduce more random cut-off points for entry into high-demand courses such as medicine, dentistry, law, pharmacy and science when CAO offers issue on Tuesday next.

This means that even though a candidate achieves the points required to gain entry to a course, there is no guarantee they will be accepted.

One senior source said they now expect to receive significantly more students with 600-plus points this year, which will make it harder to differentiate between top applicants.

"That means more random selection for courses like medicine, which is devastating for candidates," the source said.

Under the CAO system, candidates can score a maximum of 625 points, the equivalent of 6 H1 grades.

Record numbers of students are thought to have achieved points at or above this level in 2021, though the [State Examinations Commission](#) has declined to provide a breakdown of high-achievers.

For example, the Institute of Education – a grind school in Dublin – said a record 90 of its students achieved in excess of 600 points this year. Of these, five secured eight H1s grades, while one secured nine H1s.

Last year, universities were forced to introduce random selection for candidates in about 70 honours degree courses. These were in areas ranging from medicine to science, pharmacy, education and nursing.

‘Unique’ system

Minister for Education [Norma Foley](#) has defended the integrity of this year’s high grades on the **basis that students “got what they deserved”** due to school closures.

She said the decision to provide a “unique” system of accredited grades and written exams this year was aimed at ensuring equity and fairness for students and “today is a reward for them.”

Separately, new figures show thousands of students did not turn up for written exams which they were registered to sit. These students were able to avail of teacher-assessed accredited grades.

More than half of students, for example, opted not to sit written exams for Irish. A total of 48 per cent sat the exam, while 52 per cent opted to receive accredited grades.

The most popular exam was applied maths, where 78 per cent decided to sit the written exam while 21 per cent availed of accredited grades.

From Irish Times 4 Sept 2021

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/colleges-expect-spike-in-random-selection-1.4664521>