

LESSON 5

Higher Education

60 minutes

Strand 1.2: Understanding my Progression Opportunities

Participating

Outcome LCW.M1.S2.PROG.5

Outcome LCW.M1.S2.PROG.1

WHAT THIS LESSON DOES

You pick two real Higher Education courses, fill a researched comparison grid from CAO and college sources, set your own weights, and judge whether you accept the result. You name the three Irish HE provider types, recognise the CAO and alternative routes (DARE, HEAR, mature entry, FET progression), and bank the work in your HE Investigation artefact.

CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Outcome	What the specification asks for
LCW.M1.S2.PROG.5	investigate education and training opportunities available to students post-senior cycle.
LCW.M1.S2.PROG.1	identify the diversity of progression opportunities available to them.

WHAT STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO DO

- Identify the three Irish HE provider types and name the provider type for each course you compare
- Recognise the CAO and alternative routes including DARE, HEAR, mature entry and FET progression
- Compare two real courses with self-set weights and judge whether you accept the result

KEY TERMS

Term	What it means here	For example
Higher Education	Third-level study after senior cycle at universities, technological universities and private colleges, usually leading to a degree or equivalent award.	A four-year degree at a technological university, or a three-year course at a private college
CAO	The Central Applications Office: the national system most school-leavers use to apply for Higher Education courses in the Republic of Ireland.	Listing course choices in order of preference on your CAO application
alternative entry	Routes into Higher Education that sit beside standard points-based CAO entry, including DARE (Disability Access Route to Education), HEAR (Higher Education Access Route), mature entry and progression from Further Education.	Progressing from a QQI Level 5 PLC into year one or advanced entry of a related degree

BEFORE THE BELL

- Prepare printed fallback pairs of generic higher education course pages mapped to the five criterion rows in case of access issues.
- Be ready to model one CAO course page path for 60 seconds before the comparator opens (course title → entry / modules / location).
- If HE Investigation does not yet exist for students, plan the one-minute create-if-missing setup with fixed headings and filename your ****HE Investigation**** document (Strand 1.2) / .docx in Strand 1.2.
- Confirm students can reach CAO course information, college sites, Qualifax or Careers Portal on school devices. Prepare a printed fallback pair of generic course pages mapped to the five criterion rows (entry, content, where, cost, after) if connectivity fails; prefer live research. HE Investigation container: if no prior lesson created this file, spend one minute at the start of the activity: create or open your ****HE Investigation**** document (Strand 1.2) / .docx in the Strand 1.2 portfolio folder with the fixed headings listed in the student copy (Course A/B + providers; criteria + sources; weights; comparator result; accept or reject + which weight to change). There is no assumed prior artefact; create-if-missing is the rule. Minimum source set per course: one CAO (or college) course page + one college fees or SUSI pointer + one outcomes or Careers Portal snippet. If time collapses, accept cost and after as 'source + date noted, detail later' rather than empty or invented cells.
- On screen this lesson: options comparator.

Higher Education

HOW THE LESSON RUNS		
5 min	introduction	Getting Started
5 min	content	Key Terms
35 min	activity	Compare Two Real HE Courses
10 min	content	Think About It
5 min	summary	What you covered

STEP BY STEP

5 min Getting Started

Open with one sentence naming the three higher education provider types, which are universities, technological universities and private colleges. Then name the CAO as the main application route, and mention DARE (Disability Access Route to Education), HEAR (Higher Education Access Route), mature entry and FET progression as alternative routes. Three or four minutes is enough here, because the learning happens in the comparator rather than in this introduction, and a full talk on the CAO would eat the research time.

Before students open the tool, spend about 60 seconds modelling how you open one CAO course page or college site on the board: find the course title, then read the entry requirements, then the modules, then the location. Students follow that same path for both of their own courses.

Students will need access to course information such as CAO handbook pages, college sites or Qualifax. If devices or connectivity are limited, pair students so they can share sources.

5 min Key Terms

One clean pass of the table is enough, and the research time in the next step is where students need the minutes, so keep this to a reading and a check for questions. If students ask about current points, steer them to live CAO or college data rather than quoting remembered cut-offs, because those figures go stale every year.

35 min Compare Two Real HE Courses

On screen: options comparator

SUGGESTED TIMING

- **0-5 mins:** create/open HE Investigation with headings; students name their two courses and providers out loud to a partner so nobody sits on blank labels.
- **5-25 mins:** fill cells from research (protect entry, content, where first); circulate and challenge empty or brochure-speak answers.
- **25-30 mins:** set weights, read the result, try one deliberate re-weight (cost or location to Matters most).
- **30-35 mins:** write the comparison into HE Investigation with the accept / reject judgement.

TEACHING TIPS

The pedagogy is the weighting. A student who weights 'close enough to live at home' heavily should get a different winner from one who weights 'work placement in year three'. When someone rejects the winner, ask which weight lied.

Watch for two courses chosen only because the titles sound similar: push them toward real difference on entry, content, place, cost or outcomes.

Look-fors in the portfolio write-up: named courses and providers with provider type, criteria filled from sources, clear weights, a stated result, and an honest accept or reject line.

10 min Think About It

Use the first prompt with anyone who quietly ignored the tool's result. The second prompt keeps alternative entry in view, but students only need to name where they would check, not do the checking now, because a second round of research at this point would run past the bell and leave nothing written down.

If cost or grant talk brushes against family financial stress, point quietly to SUSI information, Citizens Information and the guidance counsellor, and do not probe further.

If a pair finishes early, ask them to name one question they would put to someone at an open day that the grid still cannot answer.

5 min What you covered

Spot-check that each student has an HE Investigation document saved under that name, and that it names two real courses rather than placeholders. If the accept or reject line is blank, the student has not yet seen their own priorities change the result, so send them back to one deliberate re-weight before they leave.

TEACHING MOVES

- Model navigating a sample CAO course page for the whole class before the tool opens.
- Circulate during the activity to prompt use of official sources (CAO, college fees/SUSI, HEA or Careers Portal outcomes).
- If time collapses, protect entry, content and where; accept cost and after as source + date noted.
- Use whole-class discussion for the reflection prompts if needed.
- Encourage noting the source for every data entry.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

- Using guessed data: direct students to CAO or college websites for verification.
- Rejecting results without reflection: revisit the weight prompts in discussion.
- Choosing unrealistic courses: steer towards options with genuine interest.
- Empty HE Investigation container: create-if-missing with the fixed headings before research starts.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Support: pre-annotate one model cell per row from a sample CAO page, or pair students for research while each still owns their own weights and accept/reject line; offer sentence starters for the accept/reject judgement.
- Extension: one deliberate re-weight logged in HE Investigation; an open-day question the grid cannot answer; a named graduate-outcome source (HEA graduate outcomes, college employment reports) pinned to the existing 'after' row; or a third course sketched as a next comparison.

WHAT STUDENTS ARE LEFT WITH

- HE Investigation: two courses on weighted criteria, result, and whether you accept it