



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT THROUGHOUT FORM 6

How important is the role of the parent in the educational process and why? Studies show that parents are the single greatest influence on a student's career selection. It is important for parents to give students support and encouragement to explore the many options available to find the best career fit for them (the student), as opposed to trying to live out their own unfulfilled career dreams through your young student. It is important to start the discussion as early as possible, don't wait till they are looking at CAO forms in late sixth year. Much of the formative discussion should have happened at this stage. If the process is started early, there is less likelihood of making unwise decisions

This is a stressful time for all involved. It is important for the parent to stay positive and give encouragement at all times. Another stress that comes to the fore at this stage is that you are now into the phase of "letting go" and that can be very difficult. Your attitude matters a great deal! Stay positive! The work place today is ever-changing and may appear scary to a young person. Don't make the past seem perfect and the future terrifying. Knowledge is power, so encourage them to get as much information and take advantage of as many opportunities as possible.

Don't always say no! Don't shoot down ideas they may have about their future careers. If you react negatively, it may shut down the whole exploration process. Keep the lines of communication open, as you encourage them to gather as much information on any particular career as possible. That research may provide the results you'd imagined in the first place, they may come to realise that they were on the wrong path by themselves. The difference is that they were in control of the learning and making the decision based on it. This is exactly the skill you need them to have when they face the adult world.

The choice of career is their first real step into adulthood. You are now very much an observer rather than a participant in the process. Encourage early exploration and discourage expectations that "*things will work out by themselves*".

Your role is more of providing the questions, and letting them look for the answers. This may not be as easy as it sounds and there will be times when it is hard to resist the pressure to tell them the answers. Remember this is a big change from what both of you are used to. However difficult it is you the parent have to avoid making the decisions.

Look out for the danger signs in your child's approach: -

- Waiting to the last minute to make decisions
- Unrealistic expectations
- Promises to work miracles in study next term
- Carrying too many higher level subjects in spite of poor reports from school
- Poor approach to homework
- Thinking a 'grind' in a subject will make all the difference
- Interference from social activities or a weekend job which is funding their social life
- Selecting a course because the career is well paid. They are more likely to gain a good qualification if the area of study is something they really like.



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Things you can do

- Look up the courses on [CareersPortal](#) for yourself. Coming from an adult's point of view you may have some questions that your child has overlooked
- Make sure that they go to some open days or attend Virtual Open Days. These are a must for students trying to come to terms with the various colleges and courses.
- However, an Open Day will be no help if there has been no preparatory work beforehand.
- Do you know of anyone currently doing the course?
- Do you know anyone who is in the planned career?
- Look at the list of proposed courses and ask if they have all been researched. Any that have not been thoroughly researched should not be on the list.
- Have the choices been discussed with a Guidance Counsellor?
- What is the backup plan? What if the expected results do not happen?
- Be aware of the risks of failing a crucial higher level paper like English or Maths, A H 8 on a higher level paper will not be accepted whereas an O6 on a Lower level paper might have been acceptable.

A few simple rules

- Be involved, but not in control
- Advise, but do not decide
- Support, but do not dominate

The Careers Team

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