



24 February 2021

Re: State Examinations 2021

Dear Principal,

The Government, on Wednesday 17 February 2021, confirmed that the written Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations will be held in June with related components also proceeding as far as possible subject to public health advice. A corresponding process of grades accredited by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will also be available to students who opt to receive them. The Government has also announced that the Junior Cycle examinations will not be run in 2021. This decision follows intensive engagement with education stakeholders bilaterally and through the Planning for State Examinations 2021 Advisory Group.

Key points to note:

- Students will have the option of whether to sit the examinations, receive SEC Accredited Grades, or both, on a subject by subject basis.
- Students who opt for both will have their better grades in each subject reflected in their results.
- Students will be required to register on the student portal; confirm their subject and level entry details; opt for the examinations and/or to receive SEC Accredited Grades. The SEC's Candidate Portal is expected to open in the week of 8 March 2021 to allow students to make their choices. Further details will be issued in advance.
- There will be no fees payable for the 2021 examinations and no fees for SEC Accredited Grades.
- It is intended that the results of both the examinations and the SEC Accredited Grades processes will issue to students within the required timeframe for progression to higher and further education in Ireland.

Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations

All students may opt to take Leaving Certificate examinations (the written examinations and related additional components in each subject as appropriate) in 2021.

- The timetables for the written Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied examinations have been published by the SEC and are available [here](#). Examinations will commence on 9 June 2021.
- Last August, a series of changes were announced for the Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021. These changes are outlined in *Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021*. A revised version of the



document was published in December 2020, which includes clarifications in relation to a number of subjects, which is available [here](#). Teachers and school management are asked to examine this document closely to ensure the adjustments in each subject are understood and that they are communicated to students.

- The SEC and the Department are continuing to engage with the stakeholders on the arrangements for the safe conduct of the examinations in June and on the supports that will be provided to schools. The SEC will be in contact with schools on their centre arrangements shortly and further guidance will issue in due course.
- Oral examinations will be arranged by schools during the Easter period and shortly after, outside tuition time and subject to public health advice. Schools will receive guidance on arranging these, as the tests should be undertaken in school by a teacher of the school, wherever possible. There will also be flexibility to source a teacher locally, should the need arise. The tests will be recorded and returned to the SEC for marking.
- Coursework will proceed in subjects where it forms a normal part of the examination. Additional time will be provided by the SEC for completion of this work. This could be from one to a number of weeks with the amount of additional time related to the type of coursework.
- Completion schedules for these components will be issued to schools in the coming weeks.
- In a small number of subjects, it will not be possible to proceed with additional assessment components given public health considerations. Further details will be advised by the SEC shortly.
- It will not be possible to mix elements of accredited grades with components of examinations.

State Examinations Commission Accredited Grades

All Leaving Certificate 2021 school students will be able to opt to receive SEC Accredited Grades on a subject by subject basis. Further information on the process of SEC Accredited Grades will be provided, including a general explanatory guide which will be published by early next week. This will be followed by a more detailed guide for teachers and schools. This information will be communicated directly to schools and also published on www.gov.ie.

- As part of the process, schools will provide the SEC with school-estimated marks in all subjects for all students. These marks will be provided following an in-school alignment process and approval at school level.
- A national standardisation process will take place. The process will not use historical school by school data on past performance in Leaving Certificate Examinations. Data on the Junior Cycle performance of the Leaving Certificate class of 2021, recent national Leaving Certificate results data and the national distribution of students' results may form part of this process.



- Students will continue to be taught in schools up until the end of the final term which will finish some days earlier than usual. Details of the new finish date will be given as soon as possible. This is to allow teachers and schools time to finalise their elements of the SEC Accredited Grades process.

Providing for both of these measures is essential to ensuring a fair system, having regard to the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic and the loss of learning that has occurred for this group of students.

The SEC Accredited Grade process provides contingency for any circumstance in which it is either not possible to hold examinations or students are unable to attend the examinations. The process provides for students who are unable to sit the examinations at the scheduled time, for example, students who may be at very high-risk from COVID-19, or who have Covid or are self-isolating at the time of the examinations; or it may not be possible to run the examinations in one or more examination centres or more generally because of COVID-19 related restrictions. There will be no alternative sitting of examinations to provide for bereaved candidates, as there was in 2019, or for any other circumstance.

Junior Cycle 2021

The Government announced that the Junior Cycle examinations will not be run in 2021. Schools will be provided with guidance on continuing to engage this year group in online learning and assessment during the period of school closure and through in-person learning when schools reopen.

Further details regarding both Leaving Certificate 2021 and Junior Cycle 2021 will be published at www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate and www.gov.ie/juniorcycle as they become available.

Yours faithfully,

Dalton Tattan
Assistant Secretary General
Department of Education