



## Government decision regarding 2021 State Examinations

### Outline of Arrangements – more detail will follow

Every student will be offered and will be entitled to avail of **either or both** of the following

- (a) Sitting and receiving grades in the established Leaving Certificate examinations including, where applicable, her/his performance in the completion of additional assessment components (coursework, orals, etc.) associated with particular subjects. The additional assessment component/s will be externally marked by the SEC
- (b) receiving a State Examinations Commission Accredited Grade (to be called an SEC-Accredited Grade) in each subject, based on the school's estimate of the student's likely performance in the conventional examinations (had COVID-19 not interrupted teaching and learning in schools) involving and subject to a national standardisation process. In a subject with additional assessment components two estimates will be provided – one reflecting the proportion of the overall mark assigned to the written examination and the other reflecting the proportion of the overall mark assigned to the additional assessment component. In the process of arriving at the SEC-Accredited Grade these two estimates will be combined.

## The Leaving Certificate Examinations

### a) The written examinations will:

- Operate in accordance with the normal timetable that has been published on the SEC website and will commence on 9<sup>th</sup> June - Leaving Certificate Established Timetable: <https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-46337197.pdf> Leaving Cert Applied Timetable: <https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-97312473.pdf>
- Be conducted, subject to public health advice and will provide, as far as possible, access to the examinations for very high-risk students, and

### b) Additional assessment components – marked by the SEC – Leaving Certificate

For those students who wish to avail of the established Leaving Certificate (i.e. sit the written examination in a subject), additional assessment components such as orals, practical

performance tests and coursework will run, subject to public health advice. Because of public health advice, schools are being asked to source teachers locally to administer some of the tests.

Some additional assessment components in certain subjects will not run for public health reasons – the day Practical Examinations are a case in point.

It is important to note that teachers will not be required to assess their own students for any element of the traditional Leaving Certificate option.

## **SEC-Accredited Grades system**

An Accredited Grades system, to be operated by the State Examinations Commission, will be available whereby Leaving Certificate students can opt to have grades in some or all of their subjects issued to them at the same time as the Leaving Certificate grades/examination results.

In determining the SEC-Accredited Grades:

- The professional judgement of a student's teacher/s will not be subject to appeal
- A form of in-school alignment to ensure fairness amongst students at school level will take place
- A process of standardisation at national level to ensure as much fairness as possible amongst this year's students will be applied
- The SEC-Accredited Grade and Leaving Certificate Examinations outcomes will have regard to the pattern of results in 2020, and previously, with more details of the process to be determined having regard to advice from the SEC
- Provision will be made, insofar as practicable, for out-of-school learners and students studying one or more subjects outside school to apply to receive SEC-Accredited Grades through the devising of an appropriate and practicable process

## **Results that a student will receive**

If a student opts to sit the Leaving Certificate examinations (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components) and not to receive any SEC-Accredited Grades, then s/he will receive Leaving Certificate results/grades in the usual manner.

If a student opts only to receive SEC-Accredited Grades and not to sit any Leaving Certificate examinations (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components), then s/he will receive SEC-Accredited Grades.

If a student opts to sit the Leaving Certificate examination (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components) in one or more subjects and also to receive SEC-Accredited Grades in one or more subjects, then s/he will receive the best combination of the Leaving Certificate grades and SEC-Accredited Grades achieved.

The results from both processes will issue at the same time in August and no reference will be made to the particular process that produced the grade in a subject. A few days later, the students will be given access to the breakdown: for Examinations, the written paper, the oral, and the practical, project (as appropriate to each subject); and for the SEC-Accredited Grade, the school's estimated mark, the calculated mark, and the calculated grade. This information will be made available to the student for a limited period on an electronic portal.

Students will be allowed to appeal their result: for Examination Grades in the normal way; for SEC-Accredited Grades, a process review focused on identifying possible errors in the transmission and processing of student data.

In the student's Leaving Certificate, there will be no distinction drawn between a grade that derives from the Leaving Certificate Examinations process and a grade that derives from the SEC-Accredited Grades process.

## **Legislation**

Necessary legislation will be brought forward to confer on the State Examinations Commission power to operate a system of SEC-Accredited Grades and to protect the process and teachers against abuse including canvassing.

## **Timeline for Schools' Estimations – towards SEC-Accredited Grades**

The closing date for the receipt of student work that can be taken into account for the purposes of the SEC-Accredited Grade process will be **14<sup>th</sup> May, 2021**. More detail will follow on what data may/may not be used.

Schools will close to all students from **28<sup>th</sup> May, 2021** to allow for the conclusion of the work (including alignment) necessary at school level within the process.

## **SEC-Accredited Grades – protection in relation to rank ordering**

It has been widely reported that the Department breached and betrayed the trust of teachers by reneging on an assurance given to teachers, in relation to the 2020 calculated grades system, that the student ranking would only be available in response to a data access request.

Determined to ensure that this would not happen again, the TUI demanded and has secured water-tight protections in this regard. Full details will be provided shortly.

## **Further adjustment of Leaving Certificate papers required**

Taking into consideration the difficulties experienced by students and their teachers in covering the full programme of study because of the disrupted nature of the past year, the TUI has called for immediate confirmation that there will be further adjustments to the June Leaving Certificate examination papers, beyond and in addition to those already notified.

This could be achieved - without compromising the integrity of the examinations - by reducing the number of questions to be answered without reducing the duration of the exams.

## **Junior Cycle Examinations**

Further to a call by the TUI earlier this week, the Junior Cycle examinations have been cancelled.

## **Consultation with members**

The announcement by the Minister (<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2021-press-releases/PR21-02-17.html>) will no doubt generate many questions and observations from members in relation to the Leaving Certificate Examinations, the SEC-Accredited Grades process and the cancellation of the Junior Cert examinations.

With a view to centralising and collating these questions and observations, we have set up a dedicated email address – [examqueries2021@tuimail.ie](mailto:examqueries2021@tuimail.ie)

All queries received will be forwarded to your Area Representative/Official and will feed into an FAQ document that will be compiled and uploaded to the TUI website and social media.

## **Additional information**

Please note that the TUI remains in consultation with the DES on a range of issues and more advice/documentation is expected within the next few days.