



Teachers' Union of Ireland

Leaving Certificate 2021

Updated Guidance for members

Updates on 3rd March 5pm –highlighted in yellow

Update on 8th March – highlighted in green

This Guidance should be read in conjunction with the Department's Guide available at: <https://www.tui.ie/news/guide-to-state-exams-and-accredited-grades-for-lc-2021-issued-by-department.14065.html>

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**Timeline –
will be updated as and when more information becomes available¹**

1st March – 28th May	<i>Parent-Teacher Meetings</i>	<i>Formal sixth-year parent-teacher meetings should not take place</i>
1st March – 14th May	<i>Additional Assessments to inform the SEC Accredited Grades Process, if required.</i>	<p><i>Teachers may set a limited number of additional assessments up to 14th May.</i></p> <p><i>The decision to set additional assessments rests solely with each individual teacher.</i></p> <p><i>The test should be:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>no more than one lesson in duration (maximum one hour) and</i> • <i>a maximum of three class tests may be administered up to 14th May 2021.</i>
10th March	<i>Student Portal Opens</i>	<p><i>Students will, through the portal that will open on 10th March at 12 noon, confirm their subjects and levels - as well as opting for the Leaving Certificate examination and/or to receive SEC Accredited grades.</i></p> <p><i>This portal will close at 6pm on 16th March.</i></p>

¹ All dates are subject to change by the Department of Education

<p>22nd March</p>	<p><i>Modifications to Written Examinations Papers</i></p>	<p><i>The TUI insisted on additional modifications to the written examinations and it has now been confirmed that adjustments will be made to the written examinations.</i></p> <p><i>Subject by subject detail of modifications will issue in the week beginning 22nd March.</i></p>
<p>26th March – 12th April Easter Break</p>		
<p>26th March – 15th April</p>	<p><i>Oral Examinations</i></p>	<p><i>Oral examinations in Irish and modern languages will take place. They must take place outside of tuition time.</i></p>
<p>End April/early May</p>	<p><i>Student Portal Re-opens</i></p>	<p><i>The portal will re-open and students will be allowed to review their choices.</i></p>
<p>9th April</p>	<p><i>RACE</i></p>	<p><i>Closing date for receipt of late applications for RACE</i></p>
<p>Prior to 14th May</p>	<p><i>Student Options advised to teachers</i></p>	<p><i>The final confirmed candidate details will be provided to schools in advance of the in-school process.</i></p>

<p>14th May – 28th May</p>	<p>Phase one of the SEC Accredited Grades Process</p>	<p>The preliminary estimation by teachers of percentage marks and commencement of the ensuing subject alignment process, will take place during the period 14th May to 28th May.</p> <p>During this phase, teachers may individually prepare for subject alignment meetings including reviewing records of work and available information and commence the subject alignment process, without impacting on tuition time.</p>
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28th May School closes to all students

<p>Week beginning 31st May</p>	<p>Phase Two of the SEC Accredited Grades Process - subject alignment process</p>	<p>During this phase, schools will finalise the alignment process and prepare the school's estimated percentage marks for transmission to the SEC.</p>
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<p>3rd June</p>	<p>Transmission of school's estimated marks to SEC</p>	<p>Schools transmit estimated percentage marks to the SEC by 3rd June.</p>
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9th June Leaving Certificate Written Examinations Commences

Teacher Autonomy

As the teacher of your subject to your Leaving Certificate class/es, you are the expert and you have both a right and an obligation to continue to exercise your professional judgement.

It is therefore for you - not for school management, students, parents or external commentators - to decide how and in what order to deliver the syllabus for the remainder of the school year, up to 28th May.

You know best how to manage your classes.

Your professional autonomy in this regard cannot be and has not been set aside by Government's decision to have parallel processes in order to offer students a choice to sit the conventional Leaving Certificate and/or to receive SEC Accredited grades.

Should I continue to deliver the curriculum/syllabus?

Yes. It is your role to continue to deliver the curriculum/syllabus.

It is important to note that the SEC Accredited Grades Process is a parallel process to the conventional Leaving Certificate. Your primary role is to ensure that the curriculum/syllabus is completed for those students who intend to sit the conventional Leaving Certificate Examinations in June.

As the teacher of the class, do I decide what I teach between now and the end of the school year?

You do. As the teacher of the class you should continue to teach as you normally would. Government decided to create a parallel process for students but this Government decision cannot and will not impede your normal teaching and learning practices.

Any attempts to interfere with your normal teaching and learning practices will be taken very seriously by the Union. Should any interference be attempted or occur, you should contact the Union immediately and where appropriate, lodge a Grievance.

Details of the Grievance Procedure for TUI members can be found at:

<https://tinyurl.com/t69b537w>

Can I set class tests between now and the end of the school year?

Yes. If you conduct class tests as part of your normal teaching methods there is nothing to prevent you from continuing to use such formative and summative assessments, when and where you feel it is appropriate.

My students think that I am not allowed to give class tests for the rest of the year. Is this correct?

No, it is not.

As the teacher of the class you manage the classroom and decide on the best way to deliver the curriculum/syllabus. The decision of Government to establish a parallel process for students this year does not, in any way, affect your normal teaching methods.

A student has decided not to sit the written examinations in June. Who decides if that student completes the parts of the syllabus associated with additional assessment components – e.g. orals/coursework/practicals?

You decide. The fact that the student will not avail of the SEC marked additional assessment – oral/practical/coursework – is irrelevant.

You are the teacher of the class and you, as a professional, decide on the best way to deliver the full curriculum/syllabus in a manner that will keep students engaged until the end of the year and that ensures the integrity of both the Leaving Certificate and the SEC Accredited Grades processes.

If I and/or my colleagues feel that my/our professional autonomy is being eroded by others, what do I/we do?

As soon as the issue arises you should notify the TUI Workplace Committee.

You then raise the matter with local management in the first instance. If the problem is not resolved satisfactorily and without delay you lodge a Grievance - individual or collective - and will be supported by the TUI in doing so.

I have a student who has decided not to sit the written examinations in June and does not participate fully in the class as a consequence. What do I do?

You report the matter immediately to school management. Your priority is to complete the curriculum/syllabus for all the students in your class whether they

intend to sit the conventional Leaving Certificate examinations or to rely solely on the SEC Accredited Grades.

The completion of the curriculum/syllabus is important from an educational viewpoint and for progression to the next phase of the student's life.

Conventional Leaving Certificate & SEC Accredited Grades

*In 2021, owing to the impact of COVID-19 and on a without precedent basis, 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 conventional 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 should be generated initially by the teacher for her/his own records – 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 school's estimated percentage mark these two estimates will be combined.*

Can a student sit the examinations in some subjects (including additional components) and opt to receive SEC Accredited Grades in others?

Yes. The decision is made on a subject by subject basis.

Can a student sit the examinations (including additional components) in all subjects and also opt to receive SEC Accredited Grades in all subjects?

Yes. Students who opt for both will have their better grade (conventional

Leaving Certificate grade or SEC Accredited Grade) in each subject reflected in their results.

Results that a student will receive

What results will a student receive?

If a student opts to sit the Leaving Certificate examinations (inclusive of SEC marked additional assessment components, where applicable) 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 only 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.

In the Leaving Certificate results that issue to students, there will be no distinction drawn between a grade that derives from the conventional Leaving Certificate Examinations process and a grade that derives from the SEC Accredited Grades process.

The (combined) results, consisting of the best from both processes, will issue at the same time in August as an integrated set of results and no reference will be made to the particular process that produced the grade in a subject.

At a later stage in August/September, students will be given access to the breakdown: for conventional Leaving Certificate Examinations, the written paper and, where applicable, the oral, practical or project; and for the SEC Accredited Grade, the school's estimated mark and the SEC Accredited Grade. This information will be made available to students for a limited period on an electronic portal, before the window for appeals opens.

Will a student be able to appeal the grades?

Yes. Students will be allowed to appeal their conventional Leaving Certificate Examination Grades in the normal way.

In relation to SEC Accredited Grades, the appeal will consist of a process review focused on identifying possible errors in the transmission and processing of student data.

The first step in an appeal will be the appeal of the higher grade awarded – be that the Leaving Certificate grade or the SEC Accredited grade .

Will students still have to pay fees to sit the Examinations?

No. There will be no fees for the 2021 Leaving Certificate examinations or for SEC Accredited Grades.

Parent-Teacher Meetings

Can Parent-Teacher meetings take place for 6th year students from 1st March until the end of the school year?

No. The holding of formal sixth-year parent-teacher meetings in the period 1st March 2021 to 28th May 2021 is not advised. An individual parent-teacher meeting may be sought and arranged in exceptional circumstances only.

Leaving Certificate - conventional

The Leaving Certificate Examinations

Will consist of:

a) the written examinations, which will:

- *commence on 9th June and will operate in accordance with the normal timetable that has been published on the SEC website 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. Details of the public health advice will be provided, once known.*

and

b) the additional assessment components – in relevant subjects - marked by the State Examinations Commission (SEC)

For those students who wish to avail of the conventional 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 - in relation in particular to minimising travel and congregation - schools are being asked to source teachers locally to administer (but not mark) some of the additional assessment components.

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

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

Mock Examinations

Should schools schedule mock examinations upon the return to schools from 1st March?

No.

The Department's guidance is clear. If a school seeks to put in place a plan to mirror the extent and duration of the state examined Leaving Certificate exams, this would clearly compromise the health and safety of the school community. This includes any attempt by schools to schedule such exams outside of school time, at weekends and/or over the Easter period.

Plans such as these should be notified to the Lead Worker Representative and, if the matter remains unresolved, members are advised to follow TUI's advice on the reporting of such matters to the relevant authorities i.e. HSA.

It is worth noting that while schools have not yet received the public health advice that the SEC has received in relation to the holding of the written examinations in June and other assessments, it is that advice that has already led to

- *the cancellation of the Junior Cycle examinations*
- *the cancellation of some additional assessment components (day practical exams, PE Performance Assessment) and*
- *modifications in the holding of Music Practicals*

Furthermore, as there will be further modifications to the written examination papers, mock examinations would be of very limited use to students, and would not be a true reflection of the June examinations. Running them would however pose an unconscionable and entirely avoidable public health risk.

If any school attempts to conduct mock examinations, the TUI must be advised immediately.

School management has said that mock examinations have been purchased and therefore must take place. Is this correct?

No.

School management can provide the papers to teachers who can then use them, in whole or in part, to exemplify aspects of examination preparation/technique. At the teacher's sole discretion, students could be asked, for example, to consider/part-answer/answer questions from the papers in the course of normal classroom learning or as part of their homework.

Should I or can I conduct mock examinations to help determine the estimated percentage mark for the SEC Accredited Grade process?

No, absolutely not. The Department guidance explicitly prohibits the use of mock examinations for that purpose.

Furthermore, mock examinations are deeply unreliable as evidence. This is because:

- *some teachers mark mock examinations harshly to motivate students*
- *some teachers mark mock examinations leniently to encourage students*
- *some schools have mock examinations marked externally*

- *different schools use different approaches to mock examinations*
- *students regularly see the papers before sitting mock examinations*
- *the quality of mock examination papers is very mixed*

Running mock examinations would be contrary to public health advice and would put the health and safety of staff, students and all of the school community in jeopardy.

Furthermore, given the limited time remaining in the school year and the need to prioritise teaching and learning, mock examinations would be a wasteful distraction and should not take place.

My school has organised for students to sit mock examinations. What is expected of me in this regard?

First and foremost any scheduling of mock examinations either inside or outside of school time, is not in line with public health advice.

Should a school decide deliberately to ignore that advice and if students voluntarily accept an invitation by school management to sit mock examinations, there can be no expectation and there is no requirement that the teacher of those students will conduct or supervise those examinations or mark the completed papers.

Moreover, it would be unacceptable to have such an arrangement cause disruption to or usurp the teaching and learning planned by the teacher for those students.

The TUI will support members who follow the advice above.

Subject Levels

When and how will students confirm their subjects and subject levels?

Students will, through the portal that will open on the 10th March, confirm their subjects and levels - as well as opting for the Leaving Certificate examination and/or to receive SEC Accredited grades.

This portal will remain open until 6pm on 16th March.

At a later stage (end April/early May) the portal will re-open and students will be allowed to review their choices.

Students will still be allowed to change levels on the day of the Leaving Certificate examination if they choose to do so. Students who opt for both will receive the better grade in a subject from the conventional Leaving Certificate process and the SEC Accredited Grades Process.

Should I advise my students as to what level they should take?

There is a real risk that any advice given to a student by a teacher in regard to levels may be interpreted by the student as indicative of the estimated marks that s/he is likely to receive from the school towards the SEC Accredited Grades and this could compromise all concerned.

Therefore, any advice on subject levels must relate exclusively to the conventional Leaving Certification examinations (inclusive of additional assessment components).

As a protection to teachers, the TUI strongly advises that if/when giving any advice on subject levels to a student, another teacher is present. This could be the Guidance Counsellor, the Year Head and/or a Deputy Principal. It would not be appropriate for the Principal to be present as s/he has a process oversight role in relation to the school's estimated marks.

Subjects with more than one assessment component

My subject has more than one assessment component (Project, Oral, Coursework). Do I continue to encourage students, including those who opt only to receive an SEC Accredited Grade, to complete this component?

Yes. The TUI's strong position is that all teachers should ensure, insofar as possible, that all students complete projects, orals and coursework.

The Guide that has issued from the Department states:

'For subjects that are examined through a written examination and additional components it is important that students' learning and competences across the range of practical and applied knowledge and skills are considered. Therefore, teachers will need to have regard to the student's likely performance in the written examination and their likely

performance in the additional component(s) when arriving at the estimated percentage mark.'

Students should complete additional assessment components as they will:

- *be marked by the SEC and count towards their overall mark in the subject should they decide to sit the conventional Leaving Certificate examination in June and*
- *provide teachers with reliable and relevant information to feed into the estimation of percentage marks as part of the SEC Accredited Grades Process.*

Moreover, these assessment components relate to skills and aptitudes that are central to the particular subject.

Key to a teacher's appropriate professional autonomy is retention of her/his capacity to determine how and in what order to engage with and teach the syllabus. That capacity is not removed or constrained by a decision of some students not to opt for the conventional Leaving Certificate examinations.

Oral Examinations

As a language teacher, am I required to conduct/facilitate the Oral exams for my own students?

No. *You are not required to do so and the TUI is strongly of the view that you should not do so.*

Conducting/facilitating the oral examinations is entirely voluntary and does not form any part of your contract as a teacher or your obligations to your school.

As part of the arrangements decided by government, each school is being required to source teachers to facilitate the Orals. These may be teachers from the school or other teachers. The very strong advice of the TUI is that if a teacher voluntarily undertakes this work, s/he should not be asked to and should not facilitate orals for students in a class s/he teaches.

Facilitating Orals will be additional work, paid for by the SEC/Department under a separate contract.

*The teacher facilitating orals will **not** mark/assess the students' performance. The Orals will be recorded (by the facilitator) and forwarded by the school to the SEC for marking by SEC appointed examiners – again by way of a separate contract and paid separately.*

If school management asks me to conduct the Oral examination for my own students, can I refuse?

Yes, you can refuse. It is entirely voluntary and does not form any part of your contract as a teacher. If any person tries to coerce teachers to conduct/facilitate Oral examinations, this must be brought to the attention of the TUI immediately.

When will the Orals take place?

Oral examinations in Irish and modern languages will take place in schools during the period from 26th March 2021 to 15th April 2021, inclusive, and must take place outside of tuition time.

Therefore, during that time period Orals can take place:

- *Before or after the school day*
- *At weekends*
- *During the Easter break*

Can the Orals take place on consecutive days?

It is important that a student would not be scheduled for Orals in two or more languages on the same or on consecutive days.

Schools should seek to limit the period for the running of each language examination as far as practicable to a period of five consecutive days.

Therefore, conducting Modern Foreign Languages Orals in a school should, insofar as possible, not exceed five consecutive days. The same applies for all Oral examinations. The conduct of Oral examinations in different subjects should therefore be staggered.

Please note that the reference to five consecutive days is aspirational rather than prescriptive.

Who schedules the Orals?

*It will be a matter for the management of the school, following consultation with the relevant teaching staff, but schools should seek to limit the period for the running of **each** language examination as far as practicable to a period of five consecutive days.*

What is Consultation?

Being presented with decisions as a fait accompli or being told what is going to happen is not consultation.

Consultation must be a genuine engagement that seeks to reach agreement regarding matters raised (either by management or staff). All the information necessary for fully informed decision-making should be provided.

Will Orals be recorded?

Yes. The recording of the Orals will be sent to the SEC for marking. It is not known, as yet, what format the recordings will take. However, in order to protect the integrity of the assessment process, the TUI has requested that the recording be in video file format.

Will teachers be trained on how to facilitate the Orals?

Yes. Training will be provided by the SEC.

Will teachers who facilitate the Orals be paid for this additional work?

Yes. In ongoing discussions with the Department and SEC the TUI is seeking an appropriate, professional rate of pay for this work.

Music Practicals

Will schools get further information on how and when Music practical examinations will take place?

It is hoped that the Music Practical examination will take place during the Easter Break. The exact scheduling of Music Practicals will be determined by

the SEC Examiner appointed to assess the Practical. Further information will issue and will be based on public health advice specific to Music.

Coursework

Will there be a further extension to the submission dates for coursework?

Flexibility in the arrangements for the completion and submission of coursework was notified to schools in January 2021. Details of the new submission dates, which take account of the continued school closures in January and February 2021, have now been published and are set out below.

Coursework Leaving Certificate 2021	Category	Completion Date	Submission/Marking arrangements
Home Economics	1	Completed	Already submitted and marked.
LCVP Portfolio of Coursework	1	March 12	To facilitate timely marking of this subject, return by post to SEC immediately following the completion date of March 12
Economics#	1	March 15	Retained in school. Printed and returned to SEC together with the written script in June.
Design and Communication Graphics	2	March 19	Return by post to the SEC during week ending 26 March.
Physical Education – Physical Activity Project	2	March 22	Projects returned to SEC via School Portal during week beginning April 12.
History	1	April 23	Retained in school. Returned to SEC together with the written script in June
Geography	1	April 23	Retained in school. Returned to SEC together with the written script in June
Religious Education	1	April 23	Retained in school. Returned to SEC together with the written script in June
Agricultural Science#	1	April 23	Retained in school. Printed and returned to SEC together with the written script in June
Engineering (project)	2	May 7	Retained in schools for marking
Politics and Society#	1	May 7	Retained in school. Printed and returned to SEC together with the written script in June
Art	2	May 20	Retained in schools for marking
Technology	2	May 27	Retained in schools for marking
Computer Science	2	May 27	Projects returned to SEC via the School Portal immediately following the completion date of May 27
Construction Studies (project)	2	May 28	Retained in schools for marking
Home Economics (Textile Studies Elective)	2	May 28	Retained in schools for marking

** The SEC will issue further guidance to schools on the requirements for each subject prior to the closing date(s) for submission.*

Practical coursework in these subjects must be returned in hard copy together with the written script and not through the School Portal as previously notified.

Written Examinations

Will there be modifications to the written examination?

Adjustments to assessment arrangements were notified in December 2020 for the state certificate examinations in the 2020/2021 school year. These adjustments were intended to reflect the disruption to learning caused by school closures in 2020.

Those adjustments can be found at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/assessment-arrangements-junior-cycle-and-leaving-certificate-examinations-2021.pdf>

Because of the extended period of school closure in 2021, the TUI demanded and has secured additional modifications to the written examinations. It has been confirmed by the Department that details, subject by subject, of these modifications will issue in the week beginning 22nd March.

Adjustments that will be made include reducing the number of questions that a student will be required to answer while leaving the duration of the examination as is.

Further information will be provided, once available.

What factors must be taken into consideration in schools in establishing Examination Centres for the Written Examinations in June?

Due to COVID-19 and the associated risk mitigation factors that must be adopted by schools, revised arrangements for Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (Year 2) examination centres are required in order that candidates can take their examinations safely.

Schools must note:

- *Rooms may only be used as centres provided that they can and will be adequately ventilated.*
- *Schools will need to undertake their own risk assessments in relation to rooms without windows which can open to assess the suitability of the ventilation arrangements. This includes internal rooms; including those with skylights.*
- *In assessing the suitability of rooms and in the context of ensuring that all rooms are appropriately ventilated, schools will have to have regard to the impact of likely environmental noise (e.g. grass-cutting, traffic and building noise, etc.) at the time that the examinations are being held.*
- *As centres will not be consolidated as in other years, the room must be available for the duration of the examinations in the school.*
- *Schools are asked to consider, as far as practicable, maintaining each centre as a pod for the duration of the examinations in each centre; that is, the candidates in the centre from the first day of the examinations stay in that group until the last day and avoid interaction with other groups.*
- *Where it is not practicable for pod cohesion to be maintained for the duration of examinations in a centre, (e.g. space constraints; availability of personnel; mixed levels in a centre (which will impact on the aural test for candidates taking Foundation Level Irish) sound quality for the aural tests, etc.) schools will be asked to develop controlled arrangements to provide for these situations similar to the arrangements which apply in schools when students have to move to rooms with specialised facilities or equipment.*
- *2m physical distance; for each candidate there must be clearance of at least 2m between them and the next candidate (front, back, and side to side) and from the superintendent's station. In a standard 49m² classroom, the maximum density is 10 candidates plus the superintendent.*
- *Multiple centres may be located in school gyms, and other large areas (e.g. gyms, libraries, central areas, etc.) subject to the distancing rule at 2 above and an overall centre density rule of no more than 50% of the*

numbers possible in that room if applying 2m distance per candidate. For example, in a gym of 594m² a maximum of 72 candidates and superintendents in no more than three centres of 23 candidates and one superintendent in each centre. The centres must be separated from each other by a valley of at least 4 metres.

- *Please consider your overall accommodation requirements for both main and special examination centres before nominating the rooms you will use as main centres. Note; all candidates must be assigned to a main examination centre.*

Every effort should be made to use the accommodation in the school by using rooms as efficiently and as safely as possible.

The use of accommodation outside of the school should be avoided as this gives rise to security concerns due to the movement of examination papers. It can also have consequences for the orderly and timely delivery of the examinations in the school.

The SEC will not provide funding for the hire of halls or additional space.

If a student is bereaved and unable to sit the conventional Leaving Certificate Examination in June, will a further opportunity be provided as was the case in 2019?

No. As students will have the option of receiving an SEC Accredited Grade, there will be no further opportunity in 2021 to sit the written Leaving Certificate examination.

If a student is self-isolating or suffering from COVID-19 at the time of the written examinations in June, will a further opportunity be provided to sit the examination?

No. As students will have the option of receiving an SEC Accredited Grade, there will be no further opportunity in 2021 to sit the written Leaving Certificate examination. This is one reason that SEC Accredited Grades will be generated for every student and that, every student should opt to receive the SEC Accredited Grades.

SEC Examiners

When will the SEC recruit Examiners?

The SEC has commenced the recruitment for:

- *Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied written examinations*
- *Leaving Certificate Oral test recordings*
- *Leaving Certificate practical coursework*
- *those to conduct the practical performance test in Leaving Certificate Music*

The SEC will be offering examiner appointments to those who were appointed for 2020 and to those who have satisfactorily undertaken the role most recently. New applications will also be invited.

The most essential requirement for examiners is subject competence and personnel appointed to mark the state examinations must be appropriately qualified.

Examiners will be selected on the basis of their academic qualifications, their teaching experience and their examination experience. They are primarily recruited from a pool of experienced serving and retired teachers.

The main criterion for suitability is the capacity to mark examinations work with maximum accuracy and efficiency.

Examiners receive detailed training and instruction in order to fulfil their role and a support network is available throughout the marking process.

SEC Accredited Grade

What is a State Examination Commission Accredited Grade - termed an SEC Accredited Grade?

An SEC Accredited Grade is a grade generated by the SEC from the combination of school information (i.e. the school's estimated percentage mark) about a student's expected performance in a subject and national data available from the State Examinations Commission in relation to the performance of students over a period of time (two/three years).

A school's estimated percentage marks for a student will be provided to the SEC and become SEC Accredited (percentage) marks following the standardisation process conducted by the SEC. The SEC Accredited percentage marks will then be converted into SEC Accredited Grades, expressed in the normal manner – H1, H2 etc.

In the case of Leaving Certificate Applied students, the estimated marks provided by the school are likely firstly to be converted into credits by the SEC before being converted into SEC Accredited Grades, expressed in the normal manner – Distinction, Merit etc.

Will SEC Accredited Grades be given for all three of the Leaving Certificate Programmes?

Yes. SEC Accredited Grades must be given in respect of:

- *Established Leaving Certificate subjects*
- *Leaving Certificate Applied – subjects, tasks and vocational specialisms for LCA year 2 students and where relevant LCA year 1 students.*
- *Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – Link Module*

Does a student have to accept SEC Accredited Grades?

No.

*Although SEC Accredited Grades will be generated for every student and every student is entitled to SEC Accredited Grades, a student, using a portal provided by the SEC/Department, will have to **opt-in to receive** her/his SEC Accredited Grades. The portal is due to **open on the 10th March.***

Therefore, although it is highly unlikely, a student could opt not to receive her/his SEC Accredited Grades. Whether a student opts to receive the SEC Accredited Grades or not is the decision of the student. The school's role is limited to urging the general logic and wisdom of keeping options open.

One of my students has advised the school that s/he doesn't want an SEC Accredited Grade. What do I do?

Regard the information as unreliable. The student may well change her/his mind and, in any event, SEC Accredited Grades have to be generated for the student.

Irrespective of whether or not they opt to receive the SEC Accredited Grade, you are also required to provide an estimated percentage mark for all students in your class/es. Following the in-school alignment process, this becomes the school's estimated percentage mark and is transmitted to the SEC for conversion, following a national standardisation process, into an SEC Accredited Grade.

In terms of best professional practice, you must continue to teach and deliver the curriculum (including elements relevant to the additional assessment components, if any) for your subject on the assumption that all students will sit the conventional Leaving Certificate Examination in June.

SEC Accredited Grade - Individual Teacher's Role

As a teacher of Leaving Certificate students, do I have to be involved in this process?

Yes. As their teacher,

- *you hold the kind of data and other information that can provide the best available evidence of student achievement.*
- *you understand the context and circumstances in which this information was generated.*
- *you know your students' work and achievements better than anyone else.*
- *you have unique information about your students that no one else has, for example, the quality of their classwork.*
- *you know the engagement of students in your subject throughout their studies at senior cycle.*

- *you have prepared students for the Leaving Certificate examinations and therefore know what is expected in your subject.*
- *the SEC trusts your professional judgement and expects you to use that professional judgement to come up with the estimated percentage mark, taking all the information you possess into account.*

As a teacher of Leaving Certificate students, what exactly is being asked of me?

You are being asked to provide an estimate of the percentage mark in your subject that each student in your class/es is most likely to have achieved if s/he had sat the Leaving Certificate examination in 2021 under normal conditions.

*You prepare the estimated percentage marks in **draft** form for the subject alignment process.*

Do I have to provide an estimated percentage mark to all final year Leaving Certificate students I teach?

Yes. All Leaving Certificate students are entitled to SEC Accredited Grades in the subjects they studied. Therefore, a teacher will have to estimate a (percentage) mark for each student in her/his class. That draft estimated mark will, through the subject alignment process, become the school's/centre's estimated mark.

Does an estimated mark have to be a whole number, for example, 67%

*The estimated mark can be given as a whole number. However, no two students **in a class** can receive the same estimated mark. For that reason, there is nothing precluding you from providing an estimated mark to as many as two decimal places. Therefore, a student might get 72.6% or 67.23%.*

Will I have to provide a rank order of students in my class?

Determined to ensure that our members would not be betrayed as happened in 2020, the TUI demanded and has secured water-tight protections in relation to any requirement to rank students in a class. This will be achieved either via legislative protection and/or no rank ordering existing in the first place.

I teach Leaving Certificate Applied students. Should I provide estimated credits or estimated percentage marks?

You must provide estimated percentage marks. The SEC will convert the school's estimated percentage marks into credits.

Can there be a wide spread in the estimated percentage marks I provide?

There can be. The gaps between the estimated percentage marks within a class are important. If, for example, there is one very strong student in the class, it does not suffice, solely, to put her/him ahead of everyone else. It is important to ensure that the differential between her/him and the others is a true reflection of the size of the gap in your professional judgement.

Research shows that, when estimating percentage marks, teachers tend to subconsciously gravitate towards multiples of 5 and, especially, multiples of 10. Research also shows that, when estimating marks on test scores, teachers gravitate towards grade boundaries.

It is important that you try to guard against these tendencies.

Who decides what records and other evidence are to be used?

As the teacher of the students, you decide (ideally in consultation with subject department colleagues who also have Leaving Certificate classes) using your own professional judgement.

What records can I use to establish my estimated percentage marks?

You should base your judgement of the appropriate estimated mark for a student on the assumption that school had carried on as normal in 2020 and 2021 and that students had taken their examinations under normal conditions.

You should consider:

- *Records of each student's performance over the course of study including for example, assignments, projects and practical work and key assignments and practical work in the case of Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).*

- *Performance on any class assessments, for example, tasks, questions, house or term examinations etc. taken over the course of study. Evidence of learning from the period of school closures in 2021 **should** be used. In using this evidence account must be taken of students whose circumstances made effective engagement with remote teaching and learning particularly difficult. Teachers should exercise great care in using evidence of learning from the period of school closure in 2020, especially if the teaching and learning experiences of students were very different at that time.*
- *Performance on any coursework component, even if this has not been fully completed including tasks in the case of LCA. Your initial estimated mark **must** incorporate your professional judgement of the student's performance in the coursework components and the written examination. You should consider how students planned for, engaged in and demonstrated skills in preparing/completing the coursework/project.*
- *Any other relevant information related to student performance.*

It is worth noting that not all forms of evidence will be grounded in records. The professional judgement of the teacher determines what is included and how much weight is assigned to different types of evidence.

Am I required to keep a record of the information used to generate the school's estimated marks?

*In the 2020 calculated grades process, teachers including principal teachers, were advised **not** to retain any documentation that was generated in the course of reaching the teacher's estimated percentage marks. This included draft forms completed prior to the school alignment process.*

The explicit instruction was that any such documentation was to be securely destroyed.

The TUI requires that the same instruction must apply in 2021 in the SEC Accredited Grades process.

School management will be required to retain the school's final estimated percentage marks forms – those generated by the subject alignment process and submitted, post alignment, to the Principal for transmission to the SEC.

In 2020, these forms were only held until the appeals process had transacted. The TUI is advising members that the same procedure should apply this year. The Union has no reason to believe that the process will differ this year.

What records should not be used to establish my estimated percentage marks for my students?

You should not use

- *Self or peer-assessed work for which there is no oversight or role for the teacher in assessing the work completed.*
- *Short written class tests of less than one class period that assess a limited aspect of learning, for example, spelling or vocabulary tests.*

Although the above are not recommended for use in establishing an SEC Accredited Grade, they may, of course, form part of your weekly teaching methods and can continue for that purpose.

Should I or can I just rely on an average of the percentage marks secured by a student in assessments/examinations over the period of the Leaving Certificate programme?

No. Excessive reliance on numerical/mathematical records or, indeed, on any one source of evidence is to be avoided. You are asked to use your professional judgement to achieve an appropriate balance in relation to the evidence you draw upon in estimating the mark that the student is likely to have achieved had s/he sat the Leaving Certificate examinations, as normal, in June 2021 along with any additional components of assessment for the subject.

Should I look at the Junior Cycle results of each student?

No. Junior Cycle results at individual student level should not be used.

One of my students has been taking private “grinds” outside the school. The teacher providing the grinds wants me to take her/his estimate of the student’s likely performance into account. Should I or can I do so?

No. Your estimation of a student’s percentage mark must be based on your own professional judgement, taking into account the evidence available to you within the school context.

Should work undertaken by students during periods of the closure of school buildings be taken into consideration?

Where additional work has been completed after school buildings were closed (January - March 2021 and during 2020), teachers should exercise due caution where that work suggests a change in performance by the student. The Department advises that learning that took place from January - March 2021 should be taken into account. However, learning during the period of school closure in 2020 should be used with caveats.

In many cases, this change in performance is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work is done rather than what might have happened if everything had been normal. In other words, some students will have had home conditions that were conducive to online engagement whereas others will not have had such conditions.

Students must not suffer any disadvantage in estimated marks because of circumstances that were beyond their control.

This caution about interpreting what happened when school buildings closed will not, of course, preclude teachers from taking account of the degree to which many students under normal circumstances would intensify their levels of commitment in the run-up to the examinations. Students can demonstrate that intensification in the school setting up to 14th May.

I teach a student who is new to my class this year/within the last few months. How should I calculate her/his estimated mark?

- *If a student has joined your class from another class in the school, you should consult with the previous teacher/s and get whatever relevant records they have.*
- *If the student has joined the class from another school, and if the length of time is such that you think you do not have enough evidence to make a sound judgement, you should consult with school management about acquiring additional information from the student's previous school.*
- *If it is not possible to get this information please contact the TUI for advice.*

It is important to note that the consent of the student, or of the parent or guardian if the student is under 18, must be sought to enable this process of contacting a student's previous school. If this consent is not granted, it may not be possible to generate estimated marks for this student.

Statistical Software

Can my school use and/or can I use a statistical or algorithmic software package to calculate the estimated marks?

No. Use of a statistical or algorithmic software package is expressly prohibited

Additional Assessments

Am I required to set additional assessments from when school buildings re-open until the end of the school year?

*Following the return to school, teachers may, if they choose to do so, set a limited number of additional assessments - **no more than three** - up to **14th May 2021** for the purposes of supporting their professional judgement in determining estimated percentage marks.*

If a teacher feels that they have enough evidence already to provide a provisional estimated mark, additional assessment events will not be needed - the decision in this regard rests with individual teachers.

Over-assessment must be avoided.

*Should a teacher set additional assessments **up to 14th May**, these assessments should be considered proportionately with other forms of evidence of the student's learning over the programme.*

If, as a teacher, I decide to set additional assessments, what would that entail?

If a teacher feels that s/he has sufficient information on which to base an estimated percentage mark, s/he does not need to set additional assessments.

If, however, a teacher decides to set an additional assessment, that assessment:

- *must be designed by the class teacher*
- *must be no more than one lesson in duration (maximum one hour) and*
- *can be written, oral, aural or practical*

A maximum of three such class such assessments/tests may be administered.

Any such assessment must be completed by 14th May 2021.

Teachers must be cautious in relation to the feedback provided to students in relation to such assessments. It should not at any point cross into the provision of information to the student about the estimated mark the teacher is likely to/will provide and students must be advised of this.

Can school management schedule additional assessments and require me to set these assessments?

No. Any decision to set additional assessments rests solely with the teacher based on her/his professional judgement.

Conflict of Interest

If I have a conflict of interest - should I still provide an estimated mark?

The principles of equity, fairness and objectivity are paramount in the SEC Accredited Grades system.

If there is an actual or perceived conflict of interest involved in giving an estimated mark to a student in your class - such as a son, daughter, sister, or brother - this should be brought to the attention of the principal. You, as the teacher of the class, may still need to assist in the process, by handing over data or factual information, but you should not be involved in any judgment process that relates to that student as an individual.

*In 2020, there was additional oversight **by the principal/deputy principal** in such cases of conflict of interest. This included the principal/deputy principal countersigning to confirm that appropriate arrangements were put in place and that he/she provided additional oversight and approval of the estimated mark.*

In instances where the principal was the teacher concerned, the deputy principal made the necessary arrangements and oversaw all tasks in relation to that student and that student's class.

The TUI has sought similar arrangements for 2021 and fully expects them to be in place.

Unconscious Bias

How do I avoid unconscious bias?

You should do your best to remain alert to possible sources of unconscious bias that might affect your estimates. For instance, research shows that teacher estimates of student performance are often affected by the teacher's experience and perceptions of the student's classroom behaviour.

By being alert to sources of unconscious bias, you have a better chance of examining the evidence more objectively, focusing on evidence that is clearly about attainment in the subject and not about other factors.

Similarly, research also suggests that teacher estimates can be unconsciously affected by what they know or think they know about students' backgrounds, such as their socio-economic or family background. Knowing that this can happen gives a teacher a better chance of focusing on evidence and considering why it is thought a particular student will achieve a particular standard.

Teachers on Protected Leave

I am on protected leave, e.g. Maternity Leave, Sick Leave etc. Am I expected to provide an estimated percentage mark for my students?

While you cannot be obliged to involve yourself in the process of estimating marks, you might well consider that to be involved would best serve the interests of your students. After all, you may well be the teacher who can most accurately and fairly estimate what marks your students would have been likely to achieve had they sat the Leaving Certificate examination in the normal way.

If you do assist with the process, you should liaise with the teacher who substituted/is substituting for you during the period of your absence.

Bonus Marks and Reasonable Accommodation

My students sit their examinations in Irish and get bonus marks for this. Should I factor this into the SEC Accredited Grades process?

When estimating the mark of each student, you must factor this into your estimations.

What are the bonus marks for answering in Irish?

A candidate who answers in Irish at the written examination in the various subjects as set out below may be given bonus marks in addition to the marks gained in the subject.

- *Bonus marks at the rate of 10 per cent of the marks obtained will be given to a candidate who obtains less than 75 per cent of the total marks in the case of the following subjects:-*
 - *Latin, Greek, Classical Studies, Hebrew Studies, History, Geography, Physics, Chemistry, Physics and Chemistry, Biology, Science, Business, Economics, Economic History, Agricultural Science, Agricultural Economics, Home Economics, Music, Business Studies, History and Appreciation of Art, Civic, Social and Political Education, Religious Education, Arabic, LCVP Link Modules - written component only.*
- *Bonus marks at the rate of 5 per cent will be given to a candidate who obtains less than 75 per cent of the total marks in the case of the following subjects:-*
 - *French, German, Italian, Spanish, Mathematics, Applied Mathematics, Accounting, Engineering, Construction Studies, Materials Technology (Wood), Metalwork, Junior Certificate Technology, Leaving Certificate Technology, Typewriting, Russian and Japanese.*
- *Above 75 per cent the bonus will be subjected to a uniform reduction until the candidate who scores 100 per cent gets no bonus.*
- *No bonus will be given in the case of the following subjects:-*

- *Technical Graphics, Design and Communication Graphics, Leaving Certificate Art (other than History and Appreciation of Art).*
- *For the purpose of the award of bonus marks, Mathematics, Paper I and Paper II, will be treated as separate subjects*

Some of my students have access to a Reasonable Accommodation - a scribe, a reader and/or a spelling waiver - that would have assisted them in the written examinations. Do I factor this in when estimating their percentage marks?

Yes. When estimating the mark of a student, you are asked to factor such reasonable accommodations into your estimation.

*You can access a full description of the RACE provisions at:
<https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/BI-CA-93476621.pdf>*

Can a student still apply for RACE?

*The closing date for receipt of late applications for RACE is 9th April 2021. The application for RACE form can be found at:
<https://www.examinations.ie/schools/EN-1013-22066197.pdf>*

Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)

How will the SEC Accredited Grades work for the Leaving Cert Applied (LCA)?

LCA students have already completed a lot of their assessments. Credits have been awarded in respect of these assessments and these credits are “banked” for the students.

The system of SEC Accredited Grades will be used for outstanding assessments, including subjects, vocational specialisms and tasks due to be completed in the current LCA session.

Do I have to provide an estimated percentage mark for all LCA students i.e. first and second year cohorts?

Yes. As well as providing estimated marks for Year two (session four) students, you are also required to provide estimated marks for Year one (session two) students for a number of subjects and tasks.

Do LCA Year One students have to register on the Portal in March?

No. The SEC will be contact with Schools and Centres in relation to LCA Year 1 students.

Do LCA Year Two students have to register on the Portal in March?

Yes. LCA Year 2 candidates will be required to register on the SEC's Candidate Portal; confirm their subject; opt for the examinations and/or to receive SEC Accredited Grades. The SEC Candidate Portal will open on 10th March 2021 at 12 noon and close on the 16th March at 6pm.

Will there be further adjustments to the LCA Written Examinations?

Yes.

In the Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021 that issued in December 2020, it was confirmed that a 1.15 scaling factor would be applied to the final examination paper. That scaling has now been increased to 1.25. For example, if a candidate is awarded 120 marks out of a total 200 marks the mark will be scaled by 1.25 so that the mark awarded for grading purposes will be 150 marks out of a total of 200 marks (120 x 1.25). The scaling will be implemented up to the total mark for the examination and capped at that total.

How will LCA Practical Coursework be assessed for LCA Students?

LCA Year 2 candidates will complete the practical coursework for the vocational specialisms. The projects will be made available in the school for marking as normal by SEC appointed examiners.

In the following vocational specialisms:

- *Graphics/ Construction*
- *Engineering*
- *Technology*
- *Childcare/Community Care*

candidates will be required, as normal, to attend for an interview on the day that the external examiner is marking the practical coursework in schools. This

will take place as usual during the weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021, subject to public health advice.

For Craft and Design, as in any year, candidates are not required to present for interview on the day when the external examiner is in the school.

How will LCA Practical Performance Tests be conducted for LCA Students?

Practical performance tests will be scheduled to take place between 17- 21 May 2021 for the following vocational specialisms:

- *Hotel Catering & Tourism*
- *Office Administration & Customer Care*
- *Active Leisure Studies*
- *Hair and Beauty*
- *Agriculture/Horticulture*

These assessments will be delivered in schools as close to normal as possible by external examiners appointed by the SEC, subject to public health advice at the time.

In selecting activities and completing practical performance tests, consideration will have to be given to the relevant public health advice at the time and the possible options that students complete in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

Will the Information and Communication Technology practical take place this year?

Yes. The two-hour practical performance and written text will proceed as normal on 12th May 2021, subject to public health advice.

Will the Oral Examinations take place for LCA Students this year?

Yes.

Oral Examinations will take place during the period from 3 to 12 May 2021, in the languages of English and Communication (LCA Year 2 candidates), Gaeilge Chumarsáideach, French, German, Spanish and Italian (LCA Year 1 and LCA Year 2).

The same advice for conducting Oral Examinations for students studying Leaving Certificate Established applies to Leaving Certificate Applied students.

Will the LCA Tasks go ahead this year?

Yes.

However, in order to prioritise face-to-face assessments in other events for which this interaction is more integral and fundamental to the assessment, the interview element of the LCA Tasks is cancelled as an exceptional measure.

Students presenting for tasks in Year 1 and Year 2 (with the exception of the Contemporary Issues Task, see below) will be awarded 10 marks in addition to what they are awarded for their written portfolio. These marks are to compensate candidates for the marks that they may have been awarded for oral communication skills and marks that they may have gained for their written portfolio had the interview taken place.

In the case of the Contemporary Issues Task, completed by Year 2 candidates in Session 3, candidates will be awarded 18 marks in addition to what they are awarded for their written portfolio. These marks are to compensate candidates for the marks that they may have been awarded for their oral communication skills, the oral presentation and marks they may have gained in other areas of their written portfolio had the interview taken place.

Both Year 1 and Year 2 candidates will also be required to complete and submit their Personal Reflection Task. The assessment of this Task does not include an interview.

When will the LCA Tasks be marked by SEC Examiners?

LCA Year 1 Students

- *Tasks in Session 1 (General Education Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner over the Easter holidays, week beginning 6th April 2021.*
- *Tasks in Session 2 (Vocational Preparation Task and Vocational Education Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner in the week beginning 8th June 2021.*

The Personal Reflection Task Statement 1 should be completed in May 2021 and submitted to SEC for marking as normal.

LCA Year 2 Students

- *Tasks in Session 3 (Practical Achievement Task and one or other of Vocational Education Task or Contemporary Issues Task) will be marked in schools by an SEC appointed examiner over the Easter holidays, week beginning 6th April 2021.*

The Personal Reflection Task Statement 2 should be completed in May 2021 and submitted to SEC for marking as normal.

Is there any adjustment to the number of key assignments to be completed by LCA Year 1 Students?

There is no adjustment to the number of key assignments to be completed by LCA1 candidates.

Leaving Certificate Applied Timeline

Examination arrangements for 2021

<i>Gaeilge Chumarsáideach</i>	<i>Oral: 3-12 May 2021 Written: 10 June 2021</i>
<i>English & Communications</i>	<i>Oral: 3-12 May 2021 Written: 9 June 2021</i>
<i>Modern Foreign Languages: French; German; Spanish; Italian</i>	<i>Oral: 3-12 May 2021 Written: 10 June 2021</i>
<i>Sign Language</i>	<i>10 June 2021* See Note on Published Timetable 2021</i>
<i>Social Education</i>	<i>Written: 9 June 2021</i>
<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Written: 11 June 2021</i>

Vocational Specialisms - Assessment Year 2 Candidates

Examination arrangements for 2021

Hotel Catering & Tourism	<i>Practical Performance: 17-21 May 2021 Written: 11 June 2021</i>
Office Administration & Customer Care	<i>Practical Performance: 17-21 May 2021 Written: 15 June 2021</i>
Active Leisure Studies	<i>Practical Performance: 17-21 May 2021 Written: 17 June 2021</i>
Hair & Beauty	<i>Practical Performance: 17-21 May 2021 Written: 15 June 2021</i>
Agricultur/Horticulture	<i>Practical Performance: 17-21 May 2021 Written: 16 June 2021</i>
Information & Communication Technology	<i>In-school assessment 12 May 2021</i>
Childcare/Community Care	<i>Practical Coursework including interview - weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 14 June 2021</i>
Technology	<i>Practical Coursework including interview - weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 16 June 2021</i>
Engineering	<i>Practical Coursework including interview - weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 14 June 2021</i>
Graphics & Construction Studies	<i>Practical Coursework including interview - weeks beginning 8 and 14 June 2021 Written: 15 June 2021</i>
Craft & Design	<i>Practical Coursework - weeks beginning 8 and 14 June. Written exam: 17 June 2021</i>

External Subjects and External Students

What about students taking an extra subject outside of school?

In the case of students taking an additional subject outside school - if school management authorities are confident that there is sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to make an objective judgement, then an estimated percentage mark will be given by the school.

What about students receiving home tuition?

For students in receipt of home tuition with an association to the school, school authorities should engage with the home tutor in arriving at a decision. Whether a valid estimate of performance can be provided will depend on whether the home tutor is a registered teacher and whether or not the school is satisfied with the evidence used to support the judgement.

What about "repeat" students?

- *If a student is repeating in your school having previously been enrolled in your school for the first sitting, evidence of achievement from both cycles should be considered, but particular weight should be given to the student's work and level of achievement during the repeat year.*
- *If you are the student's teacher in her/his repeat year but are not the teachers s/he previously had, you should ensure that you, as the student's current/most recent teacher (who will be making the estimate), are in a position to consult with the previous teacher/s and have access to any necessary records.*
- *If the student was previously enrolled in a different school, then you should contact the previous school the student attended to ascertain whether additional information can be made available to support the process. The consent of the student, or of the parent or guardian if the student is under 18, must be sought to enable this process. You will need to advise that, if this consent is not granted, it may not be possible to generate estimated marks for this student.*

SEC Accredited Grade – Subject Alignment Process

What is the subject alignment process?

In this step of the process, the teachers who have Leaving Certificate classes in a particular subject this year, together review their initial estimated percentage marks for students who are taking that subject.

The main purpose of the alignment process is to ensure that all teachers who are providing estimated marks in respect of the same subject in the school are applying similar standards when doing so.

Following this element of the alignment process, each teacher will finalise her/his estimated percentage marks for the students in her/his classes.

Why do we need an alignment process?

The purpose of school alignment of marks is to ensure that:

- *the process of estimating percentage marks within a class is correctly and consistently applied by each teacher.*
- *the teachers have applied consistent standards when estimating marks; this may result in some variations in patterns of attainment across different classes taking the same subject within the school.*

What if I am the only teacher of a subject in my school?

In such a case, as the only teacher of the subject in the school/centre, you conduct the in-school alignment process with the Deputy Principal of the school.

What if I am the only teacher of the subject in my school who has a Leaving Certificate class this year?

In such a case, you conduct the in-school alignment process with the Deputy Principal of the school or with another teacher of the same subject in the school who does not have a Leaving Certificate class in 2021, subject to the agreement of the school principal.

What if I am the Deputy Principal and also the only teacher of the subject in my school who has a Leaving Certificate class this year?

The alignment process is carried out with another teacher of the same subject in the school who does not have a Leaving Certificate class in 2021 (if available), or with a second Deputy Principal, or with the Principal.

I teach LCA. Who attends/participates in my subject alignment group?

It is likely that, for the most part, there will be single teachers involved in teaching LCA subjects in schools. For this reason, it is advised, where possible, that the LCA Co-ordinator undertakes the alignment process with the single subject teacher. The Co-ordinator has significant experience with the programme requirements and also with the students.

It is also permissible for a number of (or all of) the teachers delivering LCA to be involved in the subject alignment process, assisted by the LCA Co-ordinator.

I teach in a non-mainstream setting and I am the only teacher of a subject. Who attends/participates in my subject alignment group?

It is likely that for the most part, there will be single teachers involved in teaching Leaving Certificate in a non-mainstream setting - i.e. Core VTOS Centre or Youthreach Centres. In these circumstances, it is permissible for a number of (or all of) the teachers delivering Leaving Certificate/LCA in the Centre to be involved in the subject alignment process.

The role of the VTOS Co-ordinator and/or Youthreach Co-ordinator in these Centres mirrors the role of a principal teacher in a school.

Does the subject alignment process require me to meet with my colleagues in a physical setting?

Yes, where possible. However, the subject alignment engagement may be conducted remotely to facilitate the attendance of teachers who are very high-risk or in any other category by virtue of which they are continuing to work remotely. Public Health advice in this regard is paramount.

What do I bring to the subject alignment process/engagement/meeting?

You bring your draft estimated percentage marks for each student by level, using the national template. Nothing further is required.

What are the questions to consider at the subject alignment engagement/meeting?

You and your colleague/s should consider the following:

- *What is collectively known about the different class groups - for example, the way they are streamed in a school, previous experience, students who may have moved class etc?*
- *What do we know that helps us discern how we might expect these class groups to perform relative to each other?*
- *Have we focused on information about achievement and likely achievement, (rather than, for example, classroom behaviour)?*
- *How do the students in my class compare – in terms of aptitude, engagement and achievement – with others I have taught before? Do the same observations hold for other teachers in respect of their groups?*
- *If the estimated results for one group appear to be stronger than those for another, are there good reasons for this, in light of the above?*
- *Are there particular students who are exceptionally strong or weak at this subject in comparison to others in the class(es) and other students that I/we have taught?*
- *Taking the combined set of estimated results for all groups, and if we think that these students are broadly comparable to previous groups, is our distribution of estimated marks broadly in line with the results we have achieved in the school over recent years? If not, is the discrepancy attributable to the estimated marks within one particular group, or across the board?*

What happens after the subject alignment engagement/meeting?

- *Following the consultative engagement, each teacher reviews his/her class group data sets (i.e. the estimated marks), makes any adjustments that may be necessary, and finalises a **completed estimated percentage mark form** for each student in the class group.*

- *These individual student forms for the class group are submitted to the school principal through the subject alignment group as the product of the subject alignment process.*

It should be noted that in the course of the process only the teacher who is providing the estimated percentage mark can change an estimated mark for a class group.

Can the Principal teacher participate in the subject alignment engagement/attend meetings of the Subject Alignment Group?

No; unless s/he is doing so in her/his capacity as a teacher of the subject who has a Leaving Certificate class this year.

SEC Accredited Grades – School Management’s Role

When does the school principal become involved in the SEC Accredited Grade process?

The Principal teacher has an oversight role following the subject alignment process (unless s/he is involved in that process by virtue of her/his capacity as a teacher of the subject who has a Leaving Certificate class this year).

What does the school principal have to do following the subject alignment process?

The school principal:

- *supports teachers in the initial preparatory phase at whole-school level including referring teachers to the guidance documents and instructional video(s) provided to support the process*
- *provides each subject department with the relevant data to support the alignment process*
- *reviews the data sets submitted to him/her by the subject alignment groups*
- *assures himself/herself of the fairness of the processes to that point*

- *where it appears that an anomaly or error has arisen, returns a data set for further review to the subject alignment group. In such circumstances, the principal does not have a role in altering a student's estimated mark; his/her role is to return the queried marks to the subject alignment group for further review.*

On what basis can a school principal return estimated marks to the subject alignment group for review?

A principal teacher can return the marks for review by the subject alignment group only on one (or more) of the following grounds:

- *If there was a procedural flaw in the process up to this point – for example a misalignment between the estimated percentage marks for a class group*
- *If there were unexplained inconsistencies in the data sets submitted following the subject alignment stage*
- *If there is persuasive evidence that a student's estimated mark is inconsistent with the school's information on the student's achievement from a range of sources*
- *If there is evidence of lack of objectivity (bias, discrimination) in the procedures as applied.*

Does a school principal return estimated marks to a teacher or to the subject alignment group?

The Principal returns the estimated marks to the subject alignment group who will re-engage to consider same.

The marks/forms are not returned to the teacher and the Principal teacher must not seek to engage with the individual teacher/s in regard to the forms/data.

As a school principal teacher, can I ask a teacher to change the estimated percentage mark?

No. A principal may return the estimated marks only on the grounds outlined above. The subject alignment group reviews the reasons as set out by the

Principal and considers what, if any, adjustments should be made to the estimated marks.

The estimated marks returned to the Principal teacher following this review by the subject alignment group are the final estimated marks of the school. The principal then countersigns the forms.

When should the school transmit the school's estimated percentage marks to the SEC?

The submission of the data to the SEC will be facilitated through an application on the portal or, in the case of LCA, through the online system for collection of module credits.

Data collection and transmission of the data (the school's estimated percentage marks) to the SEC must be completed by 3rd June. Guidance on the submission of data to the SEC will issue to the management of schools.

Has the school's Board of Management any role in relation to the estimated percentage marks process?

No.

SEC Accredited Grades – Standardisation Process

What happens at the standardisation stage?

- *The data forwarded by the school is combined with national data already available to the State Examinations Commission and a SEC Accredited Grade is generated by the SEC.*
- *The SEC will review the performance of this year's group of students against their overall performance at Junior Cycle.*

Can the estimated mark submitted by the school be changed in the standardisation stage?

Yes.

Is this standardisation process school "profiling" by another name?

No. *School profiling will not form part of the standardisation process.*

Legal Protections for Members

Am I indemnified by the state to carry out the work associated with the SEC Accredited Grades?

Yes. All staff will be fully indemnified by the State in relation to the work they undertake towards the provision of SEC Accredited Grades for this year's Leaving Certificate students. To be covered by this indemnity, the only requirement is that a teacher acts in good faith (i.e. follows the correct process as set out, does not use algorithms, does not reveal estimated percentage marks to students or parent/guardians, etc) in exercising her/his professional judgement to estimate the percentage marks for the students in her/his class.

This indemnity will be subject to conditions around notification and cooperation with the State in defending any legal cases should they arise and will only be capable of being invoked where a person has acted bona fide, i.e. has made every reasonable effort to carry out their role in accordance with the guidance provided and the relevant circular(s) of the Department and the SEC.

This state indemnification will be comprehensive in its scope and will be on a par with what applies in the case of other public servants who may have an exposure to legal proceedings arising from their work because of its critical and/or sensitive nature.

What happens if a student or parent/guardian submits a data access request?

If a school receives a data access request from a student for her/his estimated marks before the issue of results, the school should respond to say:

- *that in line with section 56 of the Data Protection Act 2018, it is not possible to respond to the request at present, and*
- *that the request will be taken to have been made on the later of either the date of the first publication of the results of the 'examination' (i.e. the SEC Accredited Grades process), or the date of the request.*

Other Protections for Members

Are there any other protections for members who provide estimated marks?

Yes. The following important protections were secured by the TUI.

- *First and foremost, the estimated percentage mark for a student in a subject as submitted to the SEC is **the school's mark**, not the class teacher's.*
- *The estimated percentage marks drafted by the teacher and brought to the subject alignment group are preliminary only. Once the subject alignment process transacts the estimated marks that are forwarded to the Principal teacher, become the school's.*
- *The only data and documentation generated are the school's estimated marks. **Any notes that a teacher may have from the drafting stage are to be securely destroyed.** A teacher does not retain any documentation relating to the estimation of marks. Neither does the subject alignment group. On behalf of the school, the Principal teacher retains a copy of the final estimated percentage mark forms only until after the appeals process has concluded.*
- *While, as part of her/his oversight function, a Principal teacher may refer one or more of the completed forms back to the alignment group for review, citing one or more of the grounds set out in the Guide, it is for the alignment group to determine whether or not any adjustment/s should be made. Therefore, members who are Principal Teachers are protected against any suggestion of interference in the process.*
- *Once the subject alignment group has completed its review and has made any adjustment that it deems necessary, the Principal teacher signs off for the school and submits the required data to the SEC.*
- *A Principal Teacher may not, under any circumstances, alter an estimated mark or instruct what estimated mark should be given. This protects the Principal teacher against any suggestion that s/he has exercised or has attempted to exercise inappropriate influence. Her/his oversight role and professional integrity are therefore protected.*
- *The estimated marks submitted by the school to the SEC are - and can only be - those determined through the alignment process. They are the school's - not the individual teacher's and not the Principal's.*
- *There is **no appeal against an estimated mark** provided by the school. The Appeal does not and cannot challenge or re-open the school's estimated percentage marks.*

- *The TUI identified the need to protect teachers and the integrity of the estimated marks process against canvassing/inappropriate contact by students, their parents or others. The measures agreed to date (including the potential sanction of withholding of marks from students) are a significant statement of public policy and will serve as a serious deterrent for anybody who may otherwise be tempted to canvass.*

The TUI remains in negotiations with the Department/SEC around further protections in this regard. The Department has given an undertaking that legislative protections will be provided.

Timeframe for Completing Estimated Mark

When am I expected to undertake the work that leads to an SEC Accredited Grade?

- **Phase one:** *Phase one of the process, which includes the preliminary estimation by teachers of percentage marks and commencement of the ensuing subject alignment process, will take place during the period 14th May to 28th May.*

During this phase, the teachers may individually prepare for subject alignment meetings including reviewing records of work and available information, and commence the subject alignment process, without impacting on tuition time.

- **Phase two:** *Phase two of the subject alignment process will take place in the week beginning 31st May 2021. During this phase, schools will finalise the alignment process and prepare the school's estimated percentage marks for transmission to the SEC by 3rd June.*

Progression to Third Level

Will my students who wish to progress to Third Level in 2021 be able to do so?

For the purposes of entry to third level for the 2021/22 academic year, students will be allowed to avail of the best combination of their SEC Accredited Grades and their Leaving Certificate examination grades.

The results will issue according to a timeline that is congruent with the CAO and other relevant third level entry processes.

No Precedent

Will this form of assessment (SEC Accredited Grades) be used as a precedent?

No. The Department has acknowledged the great work being done by teachers to maintain teaching and learning during this unprecedented time of a national health emergency and has confirmed, in writing, to the unions that a precedent will not be established.

The TUI will ensure that this assurance is honoured, that the terms and conditions of teachers are protected and that there is a return to the state certified, externally assessed Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate examinations at the earliest possible juncture.

Further questions

If you have further questions, please email examqueries2021@tuimail.ie. To facilitate a quick response, it is important that you include your workplace and/or branch in the subject line.

This document will be updated on a regular basis so please continue to check the website (www.tui.ie), TUI's social media and the TUI App following initial publication.

