

19 March, 2020 – Minister McHugh Announces Cancellation of Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle Oral and Practical Performance Tests

Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD has today (Thursday 19 March 2020) announced the cancellation of oral and practical performance tests of the state examinations which were originally scheduled to take place from Monday 23 March to Friday 3 April 2020.

All students who were due to take these tests will be awarded full marks for this portion of the exam.

The decision was taken in light of the closure of schools as a result of the Covid-19 virus and it will be implemented by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Minister McHugh said: “This is a difficult time for all. Students are facing a challenging period out of school and our decision on this element of the exams is being taken with their best interests at heart.

“It is the fairest response we could take in the circumstances. It guarantees that no student will score less than they would have if schools had been operating as normal.

“We have seen a new emphasis on remote learning amid the uncertainty about the impact of Covid-19 and the closure of all schools. I hope this decision will ease some of the pressure that students are feeling and allow them to focus more clearly on completing project work and preparing for written exams.”

The change to the 2020 state examinations means all students who were due to take oral and practical performance tests in the following subjects will be given full marks for this part of the examination:

- Oral tests in Leaving Certificate Irish and the Modern Languages of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Japanese.
- Practical performance tests in Leaving Certificate Music.
- Practical performance tests in Junior Certificate Music and Home Economics.

Minister McHugh also confirmed changes to deadlines for students to complete project work and coursework in a number of subjects.

Students were originally scheduled to complete these elements of the state examinations on a number of dates from Friday 20 March to Friday 24 April 2020, depending on the subject.

Students will now be given until Friday 15 May 2020 to complete this work.

Minister McHugh said: “We know we are asking a lot of people in order to stem the spread of Covid-19. In response to that I want students and their parents or guardians and teachers to be given flexibility as they work towards the exams.

“All of Government is hugely grateful for the effort, commitment and energy that students and teachers are putting in to continue education in difficult circumstances. I urge you all to keep up the momentum and focus on preparing for the exams.”

Minister McHugh also said the Department will continue to work with the State Examinations Commission to monitor the Covid-19 situation in terms of its potential impact on the other later scheduled components of the state examinations.

“We will continue to respond at the right time and in the right way, with the impact on our students at the forefront of our minds,” Minister McHugh said.

The Minister also advised of steps taken by the Department to minimise the impact on teaching and learning of the current school closures. All schools have been asked to continue to plan lessons and,

where possible, provide online resources for students or online lessons where schools are equipped to do so. Schools have also been asked to be conscious of students that may not have access to online facilities and to consider this actively in their responses. School buildings are available to staff if they wish to access the facilities in order to provide online delivery, or essential services once this is in line with Health Service Executive (HSE) advice.

The Department of Education and Skills will continue to provide supports to the education sector at this time, particularly schools with students taking State examinations.

The Department of Education and Skills has been liaising closely on a continual basis with the Department of Health in relation to Coronavirus/Covid-19 since early January. This will continue.

Ends

Notes for Editors

Further information in relation to the Department's response to Covid-19 is available here www.education.ie/covid19

Some 126,000 students are due to take the state examinations in 2020:

- 65,190 students sitting the Junior Cycle examinations
- 61,053 students are due to sit the Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied.

The examinations comprise several components spread over a number of weeks, culminating in the final written examinations which are scheduled to commence on Wednesday 3 June and run until Tuesday 23 June.

Orals & Practical Performance tests (originally scheduled from Monday 23 March to Friday 3 April) are cancelled. These tests are in the following subjects:

- Leaving Certificate Irish and the Modern Languages of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Japanese
- Leaving Certificate Music
- Junior Cycle Music and Home Economics

Students who were due to sit the orals or practical performance tests in the affected subjects will take their final written examinations in these subjects at the level they have indicated when confirming their subject choices to the State Examinations Commission earlier this year.

Project and Course Work completion deadlines are extended to Friday 15 May for the following subjects:

- Leaving Certificate Computer Science, Physical Education, Technology, Art, Agricultural Science, Agricultural Economics, History, Geography, Religious Education, Politics and Society, Music, Constructions Studies and Home Economics;
- Junior Cycle Metalwork, Materials Technology Wood, Technology and Religious Education;
- Junior Cycle Assessment Tasks in English, Irish, Modern languages, Science and Business Studies.

Second phase of practical examinations remain as originally scheduled from Monday 27 April to Friday 8 May, as well as the final written examination in the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) scheduled for Wednesday 6 May, a range of oral and practical tests in the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, along with the first examination in Leaving Certificate Computer Science on Wednesday 27 May, and the final written examinations commencing on 3 June.

Weighting of the marks for the oral and practical tests in the subjects included in today's announcement, as a percentage of the total examination marks for those subjects, is as follows:

	Oral /Practical Performance		
Subject	Higher	Ordinary	2020 Entries
Leaving Certificate			
Irish	40%	40%	50,062
French	25%	20%	23,133
German	25%	20%	8,802
Spanish	25%	20%	8,461
Italian	25%	20%	456
Russian	25%	20%	567
Japanese	25%	20%	287
Music	50%*	50%	6,618
Junior Cycle			
Home Economics	50%	50%	22,769
Music	25%	25%	10,706

* The value of the practical performance in Leaving Cert Music Higher level can be up to 50%, depending on what elements the candidate selects to be examined in.

The Department of Education and Skills has taken a number of steps to minimise the impact of the school closures on teaching and learning.

Further information is available here www.education.ie/covid19

The Department has provided information to schools about the range of online resources that are currently available, including (<https://www.scoilnet.ie/>), which is the Department's official portal for Irish education and is a designated online resource to support schools, teachers, students and parents and will help schools to continue to plan lessons for students.

The Department's Professional Development Service for Teachers has created a dedicated distance learning page <https://www.pdst.ie/distancelearning>