



Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit
State Examinations Commission
Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí
Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. N37TP65

S39/21

Leaving Certificate 2021 – Important Information in advance of the Issue of the Provisional Results

Dear Principal,

The provisional results of the 2021 Leaving Certificate are due for issue on Friday 3 September. The purpose of this circular, in advance of Results Day, is to provide you with information about the following;

- A. Issue to candidates this week of *A Short Guide to the Accredited Grades Data Collection, National Standardisation and Quality Assurance Processes*
- B. Arrangements for access to provisional results for candidates and schools including accessing the Schools' Examinations Portal
- C. Details of the arrangements that schools should make to support their students receiving provisional results
- D. Key dates for the stages following the issue of the provisional results including access to data, viewing of scripts and the appeals
- E. Some preliminary details of the appeals process that will operate this year for both Accredited Grades and Examinations

At the outset, I wish to express my sincere thanks to you, your deputy-principals, teachers, SNAs, school secretaries, caretakers, and all other school staff for your incredible efforts in supporting candidates in their 2021 Leaving Certificate experience; both in the conduct of the examinations and in engaging with the system of Accredited Grades. As we near this final stage of the 2021 Leaving Certificate, I would like to ask for your assistance once again to ensure that candidates are supported in receiving and understanding their provisional results and in making decisions about their results in the weeks ahead.

Following the issue of the provisional results, candidates will have access to appeals procedures in both the examinations and the Accredited Grades. It is difficult to anticipate the likely demand for appeals as candidates will have access to both appeals processes regardless of whether their final

result was from the Accredited Grades or the examinations. On its own, the SEC is unlikely to be able to deliver the appeal results in anything close to a normal timeframe. However, with a greater role for schools in the Accredited Grade appeals, and with support from school management in allowing teachers who are engaged as appeal examiners to be released from school, there is a greater possibility of being able to release the appeal outcomes in order to allow for integration with the third-level entry process. We appreciate that this places a further burden on schools in relation to the appeals and we are grateful for your support in this regard. Some initial details of the process and the resources that will be made available to support schools are set out later in this circular and will be the subject of a more detailed guidance document in due course.

Until such time as the number of appeals is known, it is not possible to commit to a specific timeframe for the issue of the appeal results. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is continuing to engage with the Department of Education, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Skills and other Higher Education stakeholders on the timeline.

A. Issue to candidates this week of *A Short Guide to the Accredited Grades Data Collection, National Standardisation and Quality Assurance Processes*

On Wednesday 25 August, candidates will be alerted by text and email to the publication of a *Short Guide to the Accredited Grades Data Collection, National Standardisation and Quality Assurance Processes* which provides further information about the system of Accredited Grades. The Short Guide will also be published on www.gov.ie/LeavingCertificate.gov.ie and on the SEC's website www.examinations.ie.

The Short Guide includes the timetable for accessing more detailed information about the provisional results; the dates for applying to view scripts; the dates of viewing scripts; and the deadline for making an appeal application. This is the first time that candidates have been provided with this information. School authorities are requested to use their communication channels to bring the guide to the attention of candidates. It should be noted that a *Candidate Information Guide on Results and Appeals* will be issued to candidates closer to the issue date for the results.

B. Arrangements for access to results for candidates and schools including accessing the Schools' Examinations Portal

The 2021 Leaving Certificate comprises the results of the examinations and the Accredited Grades. This is provided for in the legislation which underpins the system of Accredited Grades, **the Education (Leaving Certificate 2021) (Accredited Grades) Act 2021**. The results from both processes have equal status and the provisional statements of results and the final certificates will not distinguish examination results from Accredited Grades. All candidates getting results this year should have their achievements celebrated. The detailed national performance information which the SEC will publish on results day will be on the results of the 2021 Leaving Certificate and will not distinguish between results from examinations and Accredited Grades. The SEC intends to publish detailed results in all subjects in the examinations and in the Accredited Grades following the issue of the appeal outcomes when all of the Leaving Certificate results have been finalised.

Accessing Results – Candidates

Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied candidates will have access to their provisional Leaving Certificate results on the Candidate Self Service Portal at 10 am on Friday 3 September. Candidates can view their results and will also be able to print a statement of their provisional results.

On the day on which the results issue, neither candidates nor schools will know whether the provisional result awarded was from an examination or an Accredited Grade.

Following the issue of the provisional results, details of performance in examinations and Accredited Grades will be provided to individual candidates and to schools.

Accessing Results – Schools

Schools will have access to the Leaving Certificate results for candidates in two formats:

(i) *A Matrix report posted to the school.*

A matrix of results, in the usual format, will be posted to all schools so as to arrive on the morning of Friday 3 September.

(ii) *On-line from the SEC's new Schools' Examination Portal*

The Schools' Examination Portal is a new service for the 2021 examinations. This is a different system to the Accredited Grades Data Collection System and the ESINET system that was used by the Department of Education to deliver the calculated grades results to schools in 2020.

To facilitate this new service, the SEC will issue credentials by registered post so as to arrive in schools on Friday 27 August. The link to access the service will be provided separately by email. The Schools' Examination Portal will open on Monday 30 August when schools can login and print a test document to ensure that they can successfully access the portal. It is important that you check your login credentials in advance to ensure that you can access this service. Further details will be provided in the email which you should receive on Monday 30 August.

The Schools' Portal will then reopen at 10 am on Friday 3 September for schools to access a printable matrix report in PDF format of the results by candidate and subject/level for all of the candidates in the school.

On Tuesday 7 September, schools will be able to access a more detailed report in spreadsheet format (which can be imported into the school's CMS for analysis) which will set out the following for each candidate for each of their subjects;

- i. Examination grade (if applicable)
- ii. Accredited Grade (if applicable)
- iii. Final provisional grade

C. Details of the arrangements that schools should make to support candidates receiving results

Schools have always provided an important role in offering guidance and support to Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied candidates on results day. It is recognised that for the Leaving Certificate class of 2021 the tradition of coming back to school to celebrate the results with teachers and classmates on the day that the results issue will not be the same as in normal years.

In particular, schools are asked to have regard to the fact that, at the time of writing, the incidence of COVID-19 in Ireland is continuing to increase. Schools are asked to bear in mind the strong probability

that Ireland is not yet at the peak of the incidence of the Delta variant. Therefore, caution in making arrangements in relation to Leaving Certificate 2021 Results Day is strongly advised.

In recognising the unusual set of circumstances for Leaving Certificate candidates of 2021 who are to receive their Leaving Certificate results, schools will be able to put a number of measures in place to support candidates on the day and in the following number of days. These measures, which have been approved by the Department of Education, recognise the role that schools played in nurturing and supporting students throughout their years in post-primary.

You are asked to provide support to candidates in an appropriate way on the day, through enabling candidates to come to the school if they wish at a scheduled time, to meet with members of the Student Support Team such as Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads, Tutors and Chaplains. The arrangements for this should be in line with public health advice, the schools COVID-19 Response Plan and the school's visitor policy, .

Former students who attend the school for a scheduled visit will be required to respect physical distancing requirements and to behave in a responsible way. Gathering groups of students in one venue is not recommended at this time. This is in order to minimise the risk of COVID-19 for staff, students, families and the wider community. The health and safety of the entire school community must be considered.

You also have flexibility to ask some classes of current students not to attend school on that day to ensure adequate social distancing in schools.

From mid-morning on Friday 3 September and for the following week, you will have discretion to release Guidance Counsellors and other members of the support team from lessons, using the Supervision and Substitution scheme. This is to allow support to be provided to candidates in person or on the phone. These planned interactions with candidates are intended to support wellbeing and to discuss future education and career options. There should be no discussions about school estimated percentage marks submitted as part of the Accredited Grades process. Guidance Counsellors will play a crucial role in supporting these young people to navigate the next steps in their education and career journey by providing up to date information and reassurance in a calm and positive manner.

The wellbeing of the candidates who receive Leaving Certificate results will be supported through a number of additional measures.

- a. The Leaving Certificate candidate helpline, at 1800 265 165, which is provided by the National Parents Council post-primary will be available from 11 am on 3 September for students to reach a guidance counsellor with any queries that they may have. This helpline will operate until after the CAO first round offers and is staffed by qualified guidance counsellors. Further details can be found at <https://www.npcpp.ie/leaving-cert-helpline/>
- b. HSE/HSE-funded service providers will be available to support students through the provision of e-mental health services. <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>
- c. Wellbeing resources developed by the National Educational Psychological Service are available at www.gov.ie/leavingcert
- d. SEC Candidate helpline will be available at 1800 111135 or 1800 111136 from 9 am to 5 pm from 3 September to 13 September. Outside of these hours queries may be e-mailed to

candidateportal@examinations.ie. Please note this helpline is provided for queries relating to the Candidate Self Service Portal and the services provided through the portal.

e. Information available from the Central Applications Office (CAO) is available at www.cao.ie

Schools should note that there is a separate Helpline for schools available at 1800 520540 from 9 am to 5 pm from 3 September to 13 September.

Any questions about supervision, substitution should be directed to Schools Payroll Division, Department of Education on PPP@education.gov.ie

D. Key dates for the stages following the issue of results including access to data, viewing of scripts and appeals.

| SERVICE | IN SCHOOL | CANDIDATE SELF SERVICE PORTAL |
|---|---|--|
| Leaving Certificate Results | 10 am Friday 3 September - Schools' Examination Portal Schools will also receive a report by post | 10 am Friday 3 September |
| Access to Data - Candidates will receive (as applicable): a. Written examinations component marks and final marks b. Accredited Grades estimated marks and accredited marks | 5 pm Tuesday 7 September Schools will receive a CSV report on the Schools' Portal with details of their Accredited Grades; Examinations Grades; and Final Provisional grades. | 5 pm Tuesday 7 September |
| Application to View Scripts | | Opens: 5 pm, Tuesday 7 September Closes: 8 pm Wednesday 8 September |
| Viewing of Scripts (Flexibility here to have a viewing session on Sunday morning at the discretion of the school.) | Scripts Marked on Paper Candidates to be assigned to one of three sessions on Saturday 11 or a session on Sunday 12 September at the discretion of the school. 1. Session 1. 9 am – 11 am 2. Session 2. 12 pm – 2 pm 3. Session 3. 3 pm – 5 pm 4. Session 4. 10 am - 12 pm (Sunday option) | Scripts Marked Online Online access to view from 9 am on Saturday 11 September. |
| Application to Appeal – Examinations and Accredited Grades (No Fee) | | Opens: 9 am Saturday 11 September Closes: 12 pm Monday 13 September |
| Appeals Results | Schools Portal Date TBC | Candidate Portal Date TBC |

E. Some preliminary details of the appeals process that will operate this year for Accredited Grades and Examinations

Access to Data.

On Tuesday 7 September at 5 pm candidates will be provided with detailed information about their examinations and Accredited Grades performance (as applicable). Candidates may wish to consider this data if they are considering an appeal under either process.

Viewing of Scripts

The Viewing of Scripts process is a core part of the SEC's examination appeals and quality assurance. It allows candidates to see how the marking scheme in each subject has been applied to their scripts and to make an informed decision as to whether or not to make an appeal. Viewing of scripts will be held either in schools or online depending on whether the subject/level was marked on paper or online. Candidates will have from 5 pm on Tuesday 7 September until 8 pm on Wednesday 8 September to make their viewing application.

The timelines this year for candidates to apply to view scripts and to lodge their appeal applications are very short and the deadlines will be strictly applied. These timelines are essential to ensure that the remaining stages of the appeal process can be completed as quickly as possible. Schools are asked to alert candidates to the timeframes in order that candidates do not miss the opportunity to apply to view their scripts or to make an appeal.

Candidates will be provided with an opportunity to view their marked scripts across 3 sessions on Saturday 11 September. Schools will have the option of an additional session on the morning of Sunday 12 September.

To facilitate the physical viewing process, you will be asked to nominate one person from your school to act as Organising Superintendent. The role of the Organising Superintendent will be to arrange the viewing sessions for each candidate within the school, oversee the process and to collate and return the appeal scripts to the SEC for review.

Further details including the application forms will issue shortly. Nominations for the role of Organising Superintendent should be returned to the SEC on or before Wednesday 1 September.

For the 2021 Leaving Certificate, many of the high-volume subjects were marked online. The online marked subjects are English, History, Geography, French, Home Economics (Written) at Higher Level and Maths, Biology, Chemistry and Physics at Higher and Ordinary Level as well as the LCVP Written Paper. The online viewing process is delivered through the Candidate Self Service Portal and involves candidates having timebound access to PDFs of the scripts. Online viewing in these subjects will be available from 9 am on Saturday 11 September to 12 pm on Sunday 12 September. For equity reasons, the period of online access to scripts is limited to the same period as the physical viewing.

Appeals Process

Candidates who sat examinations only will have access to the examinations appeal process. Candidates who received Accredited Grades only will have access to the Accredited Grades appeal process. In any subject in which a candidate sat the examination and received an Accredited Grade, they will have the choice of applying for either or both processes.

The process for the appeal of an Accredited Grade is a process review focused on looking for errors in the transmission and receipt of student data. The scope of the appeal excludes the professional judgment of the school in providing the estimated marks and the process of standardisation. These aspects of Accredited Grades are not open to appeal.

The process for the appeal of an examination is a process whereby the script is sent to an appeals examiner for re-marking. This examiner is different from the examiner who originally marked the work. In some subjects involving practical/project work it may be necessary for an appeal examiner to visit the school to re-mark work stored by the school. In the interests of equity and fairness re-marking on appeal is carried out in accordance with the marking scheme for that subject. This ensures that appeal examiners apply the same standards in re-marking as were applied to all candidates in the examination. The marking schemes in all examination subjects are published prior to the Viewing of Scripts on the State Examinations Commission's website.

Both appeals processes will include further recourse to Independent Appeals Scrutineers whose role is to check to ensure the correct procedures were followed throughout the appeals process.

Candidates may apply to appeal either examination results, Accredited Grades, or both through the Candidate portal from 9 am Saturday 11 September to 12 pm Monday 13 September.

Accredited Grades Appeals

The Accredited Grade Appeal process is as follows;

Stage 1: Checks will be undertaken on the forms completed by the school to check that the information was transferred correctly from the forms to the data collection system

Stage 2: A review will be carried out to ensure that the data were correctly received and transmitted through the systems used in the national standardisation process conducted by the SEC.

This year, to seek to process the appeals as quickly as possible, schools are being asked to undertake Stage 1 of the appeals process on foot of a report of appeal applications provided by the SEC. This will operate as follows; under the auspices of the school authority, an Accredited Grade aide will extract the documentation in respect of each appeal; ensure that the data was accurately transferred from the relevant forms (including from Form A to Form B) to the data collection system. The school will be required to submit a return to the SEC that all procedures were correctly followed and then return the documentation in relation to results which were the subject of an appeal to the SEC for quality assurance checks.

As schools and candidates will by then know their results and the effect of the standardisation process on the school estimated marks, there may be concerns about the integrity of the process which will need to be carefully managed. Some information that may be of assistance is that;

- In the 2020 system of Calculated Grades, the appeals process gave rise to fewer than 100 changes of marks out of 33,000 appeals out of the total set of 410,000 results. The level of change sets a benchmark for the degree of change expected to arise through this process. Another useful indicator is that the SEC has completed a full quality assurance this year of all of the documentation submitted by selected schools and has found no errors in the documentation through this process.
- the **Education (Leaving Certificate 2021) (Accredited Grades) Act 2021** includes measures relating to inappropriate communications and false information in the context of providing estimated percentage marks. The penalties that can apply are the withholding of results from candidates. These provisions of the legislation also apply to the appeals. These aspects of the legislation; and the penalties that apply will be

brought to the attention of schools and candidates so that all parties are aware that should this arise during the appeals process the candidate may lose their result.

- there will be no acceptance of any changes from schools without the SEC being fully satisfied that the reported error is genuine and evidence of this will be sought from the school. If a school does encounter an error, the process they will have to follow will involve them notifying the SEC immediately. This report will initiate a visit to the school to inspect the documentation on site at the school.

Schools will be asked to identify an Accredited Grades Aide to undertake this role in the appeals. For integrity reasons, the SEC recommends appointing someone not involved in the initial data entry and approval process although we recognise that this may not be possible in all circumstances. The Accredited Grades Data Collection system will reopen on a read only basis to facilitate the checking process and the Principal will then be able to set up the nominated Aide to access the system.

Further information on the role, including payment arrangements, will issue shortly. Briefly, schools may claim one day for the administrative duties associated with the role as well as an additional day per 25 appeals processed.

Any enquiries on this circular should be directed to Entries section at entries@examinations.ie or by phone to 090 6442702.

The provision this year of both examinations and Accredited Grades for the 2021 Leaving Certificate has been an unprecedented response to dealing with the interruption to learning due to COVID-19. This would not have been possible without the collective and collaborative efforts of school management and staff working with the SEC and the Department of Education in the best interests of the Leaving Certificate class of 2021.

We are very grateful to you and your team for your continued support and assistance.

Majella Smyth
Acting Director of Operations
State Examinations Commission