

8 May, 2020 – Minister announces postponement of 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations

All students to be offered the option of accepting Calculated Grades or sitting Leaving Certificate written examinations at a later date

The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh T.D. has today (Friday 8 May 2020) announced the postponement of the 2020 Leaving Certificate.

Following a decision at Cabinet, all students are to be offered the option of receiving Calculated Grades for the subjects they are studying and the alternative of sitting the 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations at a date in the future when it is considered safe to hold the examinations.

The decision has been taken following an assessment of public health advice and other information and the implications for holding the exams from the previously rescheduled date of Wednesday 29 July 2020.

Minister McHugh said: “I have made every effort to run the 2020 Leaving Certificate as close as possible to the way the examinations were originally intended to be held.

“My desire had been to allow students to undertake the written and practical examinations in July and August but I have compelling evidence, based on medical advice and other assessments, that the Leaving Certificate examinations cannot be held in a reliable and valid manner, nor in a way that would be equitable for students.”

Minister McHugh said: “The reality of the impact of Covid-19 has led to a decision that has never happened in our country before. I fully appreciate the magnitude of this issue, for the students and their families, for the teachers and for school principals.

“This decision is taken with the best interests of students at heart. I have a responsibility to find a fair way to address the disadvantage that some students are facing and the impact a lack of time in school has had in recent weeks.

“The system being put in place will allow a young person to progress to the next stage of their life in a timely fashion.

“The fairest and most equitable way to do that in the current circumstances is to offer students the option of Calculated Grades for the 2020 Leaving Certificate but also to guarantee them the right to sit the examinations at a later stage when it is safe to hold them in the normal way.

“The decision has to be taken now to remove the anxiety that many students have been experiencing over how the exams would look later in the summer.”

Minister McHugh thanked the advisory group of stakeholders for their input in recent weeks in relation to the holding of the examinations.

The following is a breakdown of the process to be applied for students to be given the option of Calculated Grades or to sit the examinations.

1. The 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations, previously scheduled to take place in late July and August, have been postponed.
2. There will be no Leaving Certificate fee this year. All exam fees which have been paid will be refunded.
3. Teachers will be asked to provide a professional judgment of each student’s attainment which will be subjected to a rigorous in-school alignment process to ensure fairness.
4. The school principal will approve the estimated scores being provided and the rankings of each student in each subject in the school.

5. A special unit is being established within the Department of Education and Skills to process the data provided by each school and operate national standardisation, again to ensure fairness amongst all students.
6. The Department will finalise the grades for each student which will be issued to each student as close as possible to the traditional date. Formal State certification will also be provided.
7. Students will retain the right to appeal. This will involve checks on school-entered data; correct transfer of that data to the Department; a review that it was correctly received and processed by the Department; and a verification of the Department's processes by independent appeal scrutineers.
8. Students will also retain the right to sit the 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations at a date in the future when it is deemed safe for state examinations to be held.

Ends

Notes for Editors

There are **two main phases** in the process of arriving at a calculated grade: **School-based** and **national standardisation**.

Both phases are underpinned by the principles of teacher professionalism, support for students, objectivity, fairness and equity, collaboration and timeliness.

In addition, and in the spirit of fairness to all Leaving Certificate students, the option of sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations when it becomes feasible to hold them remains open to all students.

The process of arriving at a Calculated Grade applies to:

- Established Leaving Certificate – subjects
- Leaving Certificate Applied – subjects, tasks and vocational specialisms
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme – Link Modules.

Other materials being published include

- A guidance document for the education system and others in relation to the system of Calculated Grades is available on the Department's website here: <https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/State-Examinations/a-guide-to-calculated-grades-for-leaving-certificate-students-2020.pdf>
- A FAQs document is also being published on gov.ie/LeavingCertificate for students, teachers and parents
- Advice from the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) in relation to the wellbeing and mental health of Leaving Certificate students in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic