

**ADVISORY GROUP ON PLANNING FOR STATE EXAMINATIONS 2021**

**BY WEBEX, Monday 30 August, 2.00pm – 3.30pm**

**Minute of Meeting**

**Present**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation/Position</b>
<b>Joint Chair</b>	Dalton Tattan (DT)	Assistant Secretary General
<b>Joint Chair</b>	Andrea Feeney (AF)	Chief Executive Officer, SEC
<b>Students</b>	Jack McGinn	Education Officer, ISSU
	Adam Lambe	Deputy President, ISSU
<b>Parents</b>	Mai Fanning	President, NPC-PP
<b>Teachers</b>	Eamon Dennehy	President, ASTI
	Kieran Christie	General Secretary, ASTI
	Martin Marjoram	President, TUI
	Michael Gillespie	General Secretary, TUI
<b>School managers and leaders</b>	John Curtis	General Secretary, JMB
	John Irwin	General Secretary, ACCS
	Paul Fields	Director of Schools, ETBI
	Paul Crone	Director, NAPD
	Paul Byrne	Deputy Director, NAPD
<b>NCCA</b>	Barry Slattery	Deputy CEO, NCCA
<b>State Examinations Commission</b>	Elaine Sheridan	Asst Head of Examination & Assessment, SEC
<b>Department of Education</b>	Harold Hislop	Chief Inspector
	Yvonne Keating	Deputy Chief Inspector
	Orlaith O'Connor	Assistant Chief Inspector
	Declan Cahalane	Assistant Chief Inspector
	Eamonn Moran	Principal Officer
	Ciara Molloy	Assistant Principal Officer
	Neville Kenny	Principal Officer
	Sinead O Frighil	Assistant Principal Officer
	Clíodhna O'Neill	Principal Officer
<b>DFHERIS</b>	Fiona O'Byrne	Principal Officer
<b>Higher Education</b>	Sheena Duffy	HEA (Observer)

**Apologies**

<b>DFHERIS</b>	William Beausang	Assistant Secretary General
	Keith Moynes	Assistant Secretary General

<b>Department of Education</b>	Anne Tansey	Director, NEPS
	Deirdre Shanley	Assistant Secretary General
	Áine Doyle	Adviser to Minister (Observer)
	Grainne Cullen	Principal Officer
<b>ETBI</b>	Paddy Lavelle	General Secretary, ETBI
<b>ISSU</b>	Emer Neville	President, ISSU
<b>State Examinations Commission</b>	Hugh McManus	Asst Head of Examination & Assessment, SEC
<b>Parents</b>	Aine Lynch	Chief Executive, NPC-P

### 1. Welcome

The Chair (DT) thanked everyone for their attendance and welcomed Paul Crone (NAPD) and Eamon Dennehy (ASTI) to the group.

### 2. Minutes of previous meetings

Minutes of meetings held on 21 May 2021 and on 30 June 2021 were approved.

### 3. Leaving Certificate 2021

The State Examinations Commission provided an update on Leaving Certificate 2021.

The Chair (AF) invited Elaine Sheridan (SEC) to provide a brief update on the marking of coursework.

In cases of subjects with a practical coursework or oral component with a weighting of 30% or more, the SEC decided that these components should be graded. This was done even in cases where students did not sit the written examination. This decision was made in the best interests of candidates, providing them with the best possible results available to them.

The SEC recently issued *A Short Guide to the Accredited Grades Data Collection, National Standardisation and Quality Assurance Processes* for students and schools received a pre-results circular, *Leaving Certificate 2021 – Important Information in advance of the Issue of the Provisional Results*.

Both documents include information on key dates in respect of results, viewing of scripts and appeals.

### Results

On Friday 3 September at 10am, candidates will be able to access their provisional results through the Candidate Self-Service Portal (CSSP). Schools will have access to the results through a new Schools Examination Portal. Schools will also receive a copy of the results by post in usual matrix format.

SEC stressed it is important to note that all Leaving Certificate results, regardless of which process they come from, have equal standing. On results day, the provisional statement of results will not distinguish examinations results from Accredited Grades. Both students and schools will receive the

their Leaving Certificate results' on Friday 3 September which will include the better of Accredited grades and examination grades for those results which relied on both.

The results will be transferred to the CAO and on Tuesday 7 September, the CAO will issue first round offers to candidates seeking to progress to higher education.

Also on Tuesday 7 September, candidates will be able to access the following information on the CSSP:

- If they opted for Accredited Grades, they will receive their accredited Grade mark and the estimated mark provided by their school.
- If they opted for examinations, they will see their final mark and the breakdown of marks in their examination components.
- If they sat the examination and opted for an Accredited Grade in any subject they will see all of this data for that subject.

It is at this point that candidates will know how they performed in the examinations and the Accredited Grades.

Schools will also be provided with a report on the Leaving Certificate results for all of the candidates in the school through the Schools' Examinations Portal. The information provided includes, where applicable, the examination grade, the accredited grade and the final provisional grade.

### **Viewing of scripts and appeals**

On Saturday 11 September, candidates will be able to view their scripts. Where an examination paper has been marked online, candidates will have access from 9am on Saturday morning to view their scripts online through the CSSP. For scripts marked on paper, candidates will be able to view their scripts during three sessions in their school on Saturday 11 September. Some schools may also use Sunday morning, 12 September, for an additional session if needed.

Appeal applications will open at 9am on Saturday, 11 September, and will close at midday on Monday, 13 September.

There are tight timelines this year for candidates to apply to view scripts and to lodge their appeal applications. These timelines are essential to ensure that the remaining stages of the appeal process can be completed as quickly as possible.

The SEC stated that 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 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 SEC advised it was seeking the further cooperation of schools to undertake initial appeals work, with stage 2 of the appeals process to be completed by the SEC.

It is important to note that the recent Education (Leaving Certificate 2021) (Accredited Grades) Act 2021 included measures relating to inappropriate communications between candidates and teachers in relation to the estimated percentage marks awarded. A candidate's results may be withheld in such cases. The legislation also covers the appeals process. This matter will be made clear to students and schools.

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.

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.

The SEC is developing a further candidate guide for issue on Wednesday, 1 September. The guide will provide more detailed information in relation to the results and appeals process.

A fourth candidate guide will issue next Monday, 6 September, providing further information to students in helping them to understand their results. The adjustments made to the examination papers resulted in significant changes to the SEC grading schemes in 2021. The information provided in the fourth guide will assist students in understanding these changes and differences between the results provided on the CSSP and those on the students' scripts.

Superintendents will also be informed of the changes made to the marking schemes so as to assist when candidates are viewing scripts.

The guide issuing this week will include information for the helplines being provided by the SEC and the NPC-PP.

## **Wellbeing**

The Chair (DT) provided an update in relation to student wellbeing on behalf of NEPS:

There is a section on Wellbeing on the gov.ie Leaving Cert 2021 site which provides advice on managing wellbeing at this time. The Wellbeing link will be live later today.

There are links from that page to resources to help young people who may need support, as well as links to support services being provided and funded by the Department of Health/HSE. These include services from Jigsaw, Spunout and others. There is also a link to a leaflet that has been developed by the Department of Health/HSE signposting people to support services. The leaflet will be circulated to the group after today's meeting.

All of these support services have been briefed by NEPS on the Leaving Cert and are aware that they may have an increased demand for support at this time.

## **Junior Cycle**

The Chair (AF) advised that Junior Cycle examinations will be held later in October for early school leavers and adult learners. The SEC will engage with schools to identify early schools leavers. Schools will receive correspondence next week on this matter.

## **Comments from stakeholders:**

- There was a significant acknowledgment from a number of contributors to all the work undertaken by the SEC on this year's Leaving Certificate

- Will the information being shared with schools this week include information in relation to the marking schemes for coursework and also on the difference between the results on the portal versus what's on the scripts?
- There's a level of detail being provided with students, and less information with schools, questions might be asked as to why
- It would have been useful to share information on the marking scheme before now. It may cause confusion at this point in time given that the information available on the portal will differ from the scripts
- Thanks to the Department and the SEC on its transparent approach and for the information being shared with students, parents and schools
- There is some confusion, following the publication of the guide last week, as to whether students can attend school to get their results, or if students can attend school to print off a copy of their provisional results from the CSSP, can this be clarified for students?
- Will there be accommodation for students to go into schools to view online scripts? This is important for students who don't have access to broadband. It is also important for students who wish to have a teacher present when viewing the script.
- Its important that the stakeholder groups here ensure that the documents being issued by the SEC are brought to the attention of students, parents and schools
- The position that the Accredited Grades process is entirely independent of the examinations results should be restated for candidates
- Is it possible that the information being developed for Superintendents regarding the changes to the marking schemes could be shared with schools and Guidance Counsellors? They will also be dealing with a lot of the queries on the NPC-PP helpline, which will run from results day to the start of appeals process.
- When will information regarding the national statistics be made available?
- Will advice be given to students regarding the sharing of their data?
- Typically, teachers would like to see how their students perform, this doesn't seem an unreasonable request

#### **Response from SEC/DoE:**

- The SEC will consider how best to provide the information on the changes to the marking schemes to schools and Guidance Counsellors, in addition to Superintendents
- The details on the marking scheme, on a subject by subject basis, will only be of relevance to candidates when they have the detailed information on their results to hand
- The detailed information being shared with candidates on 7 September is at an individual candidate level, schools will receive information on the examination grade and Accredited Grade, where applicable, and the final provisional grade, for each student in their school.
- The SEC will provide clarity for students on accessing results and arrangements for attending school to access results.
- Schools have been asked to put arrangements in place to support candidates on the day of the results, noting the need to be mindful of the current situation in regards to Covid-19.
- Online Viewing of scripts is open for 24 hours. In 2019, some schools did provide for the viewing of online scripts in school but this is not something that's being asked of schools by the SEC. When a candidate views scripts in school or online, they can take photos of the scripts which gives them further time to consider an application for appeal in consultation with their teachers where available. Similarly, when they attend the school they can photograph their own scripts for later review.

- The SEC will ensure that the NPC-PP gets a copy of all documentation being published by them to assist with the management of the NPC-PP helpline.
- The Department will ensure that information regarding the NCP-PP helpline will be promoted over the coming days on social media and will share relevant links with stakeholders.
- National statistics on LC results will be shared on results day. These will be the combined results of LC 2021 and will not distinguish between examinations results and Accredited Grades. Also on results day, there will be information shared regarding the participation rate in the examinations versus the number that entered for examinations. There will also be data on the level of grade changes to Accredited Grades through the standardisation process.
- Every year the SEC provides advices in relation to the matter of data protection and candidates results, this year, this will include information on adequate security of the Schools' Examinations portal

#### **4. Leaving Certificate 2022**

##### **Revised assessment arrangements**

The Department advised that Assessment Arrangements for Junior and Leaving Certificate 2022 have been published. A summary advice note for Leaving Certificate Applied has also been published.

The document is very similar to that published in December 2020 in respect of the 2021 examinations. The document has been updated in line with prescribed materials for this year.

The adjustments made to the assessment arrangements take account of the disruption to students learning as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The adjustments to be put in place will play to student strengths by leaving intact the familiar overall structure of the examinations, while incorporating additional choice for students in the examinations. There will be no change to the length of the written examinations.

It is critical that this document is brought to the attention of school leaders, teachers and students.

##### **Logistical arrangements for Assessment in 2022**

Information on the logistical arrangement for the assessment in 2022 will issue to schools earlier than last year. For example, with Agricultural Science, information has already been issued to schools.

The SEC is working to provide as much clarity as possible and hopes to publish a document shortly advising of the dates of publication of relevant assessment information.

##### **Comments from stakeholders:**

- Welcome the publication of the revised assessment arrangements in advance of the school years.
- Contingency arrangements for next year's Leaving Certificate need to be considered
- Can a second sitting of the Junior Cycle also be considered for 2022?

- It should be noted that a number of queries have been raised in relation to the adjustments to the Junior Cycle languages and technology subjects.
- Regarding the Certificate of completion of the Junior Cycle, will this be available earlier this year than last?

**Response from SEC/DoE:**

- Arrangements for state examinations for 2022 are being considered and will be discussed among stakeholders.
- The certificate of completion for the 2021 Junior Cycle should issue later this year, this will be confirmed in the coming weeks.
- If there are queries from language and technology teachers regarding the 2022 arrangements, please forward them to the Department.
- Communication of the changes that have been made to parents, students and teachers is essential.

**5. Leaving Certificate 2020, combined certificates**

The Chair (AF) advised that the SEC, now has authority under the recently enacted legislation, to issue combined certificates for the 2020 LC. In line with this year, the certificates will not distinguish between examination grades and Calculated Grades. The 2020 Leaving Certificates will issue in September.

Also similar to this year, the normal practice of annotating the certificates in relation to the Scheme of Reasonable Accommodation has been suspended.

**6. AOB**

ISSU raised the matter of introducing a Lead Student Representative role in schools this year to support school management is their work on the Covid-19 Response Plans.

The Chair (DT) advised that this matter will be referred to the schools side in the Department for consideration.

The Chair (DT) noted his thanks on behalf of the group to Clive Byrne, outgoing Director of NAPD, for his role in the work of the group.

**7. Date of next meeting**

The Department will be in contact regarding a date for the next meeting of the Advisory Group.