

2022 ADVISORY GROUP ON PLANNING FOR STATE EXAMINATIONS

BY WEBEX, 3rd May 2022

Draft Note of Meeting

Present

	Name	Organisation/Position
Joint Chair	Dalton Tattan (DT)	Assistant Secretary General
Joint Chair	Andrea Feeney (AF)	Chief Executive Officer, SEC
Students	Emer Neville	President, ISSU
	Jack McGinn	Education Officer, ISSU
Parents	Aine Lynch	President, NPC-P
Teachers	Eamon Dennehy	President, ASTI
	Kieran Christie	General Secretary, ASTI
	Martin Marjoram	President, TUI
	Michael Gillespie	General Secretary, TUI
School managers and leaders	John Irwin	General Secretary, ACCS
	Paul Fields	Director of Schools, ETBI
	Paul Crone	Director, NAPD
	Paul Byrne	Deputy Director, NAPD
	Michael Redmond	Assistant General Secretary, Research, Development and Training, JMB
NCCA		
State Examinations Commission	Richard Dolan	SEC
	Elaine Sheridan	SEC
	Hugh McManus	SEC
Department of Education	Harold Hislop	Chief Inspector
	Yvonne Keating	Deputy Chief Inspector
	Paul Keating	Assistant Principal Officer
	Neville Kenny	Principal Officer
	Clíodhna O'Neill	Principal Officer
	Gillian Coffey	Executive Officer

DFHERIS	Eimear Ellis	Administrative Officer
Higher Education	Breda Corr	HEA (Observer)

Apologies

Mai Fanning – NPC-PP

John Curtis – JMB

Niamh Devine – DFHERIS

Anne Tansey – DoE

Orlaith O’ Connor – DoE

1. Welcome

The Joint Chair (AF) welcomed the members of the group and thanked everyone for attending the meeting, apologies were provided.

2. Minutes to be agreed

The group agreed the minutes of the meetings for 20 January 2022 and 1 February 2022

3. Leaving Certificate 2022

- *Oral and Practical Examinations*

RD from the SEC provided a presentation on the State Examinations. The group was provided with a breakdown of the numbers of candidates participating in the Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle examinations in 2022. It was then provided with the breakdown of the stats for the Orals and Music practicals which took place over the Easter Holidays, advising that the late Orals & LC Music exams will commence on Wednesday 4 May. In addition to the normal late orals which provide for candidate illness, some 600 students over 14 schools are undertaking their orals in the late window due to the delivery issues at Easter. The SEC expressed its sincere appreciation to stakeholders for their assistance in getting oral examiners this year noting how challenging this proved to be.

- *Examiner Supply*

ES from the SEC advised that examiner recruitment for the written examinations is ongoing and that there is a shortage of examiners across the majority of subjects. The SEC are pushing on with an extended recruitment advertisement campaign for examiners. The benefits of becoming an examiner were presented with the theme of the extended recruitment campaign being Earn, Learn and Understand. This highlights both the financial and non-benefits associated with this work and the meeting was alerted to the very significant increase in contract staff pay which have been secured for this year.

- *Deferred Examinations*

Joint Chair AF advised that the main JC and LC exams are due to start on the 8 June and the final LC exam finishes on 28 June 2022. The deferred LC and LCA exams will commence shortly after the end of the main LC. The grounds for access for deferred exams will be those unable to attend an examination arising from close family bereavement as in 2019, serious illness and, as a contingency, those who cannot attend due to Covid 19 in line with public health advice. SEC are exploring the issue of deferred examinations post Covid and the eligibility criteria for access to the deferred examination will be determined with due regard for the principles of equity, fairness and integrity which govern all aspects of the examinations system. The criteria will be informed by research and best practice in other regions.

SEC are still working on the date for when the exam results will be released as there are a number of factors at play.

Response from the ISSU

EN advised that ISSU had no further comments other than to welcome the news that the deferred exams have been extended to include serious illness.

Response from parents' representatives

AL welcomed the clarity and the extension to include serious illness.

Response from school managers and leaders

MR congratulated the SEC on getting the number of examiners. Children are really deflated and morale is hitting the floor after the JC mocks, wellbeing will be a factor so too is high anxiety amongst students. Grateful for the clarity around the deferred exams.

JJ appreciate the clarity provided by the SEC. Very high attendance over the Easter exams and it will be interesting to see data. Welcome the deferred clarity and anything that ACCS can do to help with the examiners recruitment they will do so.

PF interested in the best international practice piece that was mentioned in one of the slides – could it be discussed at a meeting going forward. Evidence of inability to sit an exam – last minute thing that will occur, may take a while for evidence to appear – how will this be

managed what will it look like in the operational space. Ensuring integrity of the deferred exams is crucial.

AF advised that running two sets of exams is going to be a challenge.

PC mentioned that the NAPD newsletter will include the information on the recruitment drive going out to Principals and Dep Principals. Happy with clarity on deferred exams. The shortages has had an effect on school leaders – 14 schools and 600 pupils – worry that the June exams will be affected in a similar way – it was felt that this wouldn't happen – going forward if there is a concern due to shortages we need to be told sooner rather than later.

AF advised that the numbers are well short of where SEC would like them to be at this time – examiner supply is a shared problem so would hope that there will be a shared solution – SEC checked communication which issued at the time of the orals and it was clearly stated that delivery could be problematic if examiners were in short supply. There is a message here that the system operates with the engagement and support of teachers.

MG welcomed the deferred exams clarity. Many examination related points coming through from congress especially in relation to the Orals at Easter – members supported the plans as it was in an unprecedented time but going forward Easter is a problem, TUI don't want to build a disadvantage on a disadvantage. Pressure was felt by teachers – if they were doing it during the schools term, they were available to their students. The bureaucratic work load had an effect – coming to the end of another very challenging year, teachers are very tired. TUI will not be supporting Easter Orals and Practicals going forward.

KC – ASTI welcome the broadening of the deferred examinations. But noted there is a lot of unhappiness in the system and ASTI will not be supporting Orals at Easter. KC noted that the begging letters being sent to schools/principals for examiners by the SEC was embarrassing. Noted that money was not the only factor in getting examiners on board. Agreed to support the recruitment and asked for the PDF poster on recruitment to be sent on. Echo earlier comments from JC.

MR the JC examinations have not taken place in two years, these children have lost out.

AF advised that the SEC will continue to send out the letters as the examiners are needed.

ED it is a complex system and changes can cause a lot of confusion on the ground.

DT wanted to thank people with help on the recruitment of examiners especially for JC Home Economics, which was much appreciated. He also addressed the point about the value of the mocks and remarked that it is positive that the JC is running but the past couple of years have been a struggle. In relation to the Orals at Easter, we hear what people are saying, not just money time is a big factor here. SEC will be carrying out a review on this – we can have a further conversation on where it sits. It is understood that people are exhausted but if teachers don't step up we don't have exams. He asked stakeholders to do whatever they could to support the recruitment efforts.

4. Senior Cycle Review

NK advised that DoE are currently arranging a series of bilateral meetings. The SEC will be asked to conduct an evaluation on the 2022 experience and provide advice in the Easter scheduling of Orals and Practicals in subsequent years.

MR advised that nothing formal has been issued to schools and pupils are looking at TY as an option.

NK stated that we are finalising things on DoE end and working to get something out to schools soon.

PC – If Senior Cycle is going to impact on timetables – if school timetables are drafted it will be hard for them to be changed.

5. AOB

- Joint Chair **DT** advised that the group need to review its Terms of Reference – this can be added to the agenda for the next meeting.
- Thankful for schools taking in the Ukrainian students noting that this will be a challenge going forward for all stakeholders.
- A request has gone to the managers for details of any students due to sit their Ukrainian final year examinations. If there are any such pupils that the group may know of sitting the Leaving Cert 2022 could they let PK know after the meeting, an email was sent during the week.

PB queried if the deferred examinations will be in a central location or will they be in all schools. Joint Chair **AF** advised that details are being worked through and that there will be further engagement with the managers in advance of any announcement.

- AL advised that a helpline has been launched for all school going Ukrainian pupils.

6. Date of next meeting

- The Department will be in contact regarding a date for the next meeting.