



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

S64/20

TO THE MANAGEMENT AUTHORITIES OF POST PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND OTHER ENTITIES RECOGNISED BY THE SEC TO HOLD EXAMINATIONS

Exceptional arrangements for the completion and authentication of Coursework 2021 due to COVID-19

The purpose of this circular is to provide additional information in relation to exceptional arrangements for the completion and authentication of coursework for 2021 that have been put in place due to the ongoing, unprecedented circumstances associated with COVID-19.

While this circular does not apply to Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) coursework similar arrangements will apply to LCA. Details will issue separately to LCA Programme Co-ordinators in due course.

In order to assist and support schools and candidates in relation to the engagement and completion of coursework, the SEC will provide as much flexibility as is allowable, while maintaining the integrity of the process and equity and fairness to all. A number of measures have already been put in place to support the completion of these components for 2021 including:

- Earlier issues of briefs and coursework material
- Additional time for completion
- Adjustments to the requirements of the briefs and including greater flexibility in relation to completion arrangements, reduction in the number of tasks etc.

Information in relation to further additional flexibility as part of the exceptional arrangements for the completion of coursework in 2021 is outlined in the circular.

There is a wide range of coursework components associated with the certificate examinations which may be summarised under two broad categories.

Category 1:

This category of coursework requires the candidate to submit a digital or hardcopy report based on their chosen brief. Teacher oversight is required throughout the candidate's engagement with the coursework and the write-up of the report. However, it is acceptable for the candidate to engage with the coursework outside of the school setting, provided there is appropriate oversight.

Oversight is normally maintained through periodic review of the work and discussion of it with the candidate rather than by direct observation of the candidate at work.

The subjects which have coursework components in this category are:

Leaving Certificate

- Religious Education
- Geography
- History
- Politics and Society
- Agricultural Science
- Economics
- LCVP Portfolio of Coursework

Junior Cycle:

- Religious Education

Category 2:

This category of coursework requires the candidate to complete an artefact and supporting portfolio. Some elements of the portfolio may be completed outside of school, as already indicated in the guidance for the subject concerned. The production of the artefact requires access to specialist rooms and equipment. In the interest of equity and fairness to all candidates and due to health and safety concerns, it is not permissible for the candidate to complete the artefact element of this coursework, (or any elements of the portfolio that the subject guidance specifically states must be carried out in school), outside of the school setting.

The subjects which have coursework components in this category are:

Leaving Certificate:

- Art
- Engineering (project)
- Construction Studies (project)
- Technology
- Physical Education (Physical Activity Project)¹
- Physical Education (Performance Assessment)
- Design and Communication Graphics
- Computer Science

Junior Cycle:

- Metalwork
- Materials Technology Wood
- Technology
- Visual Art*

*For final examination, Junior Cycle Visual Art is assessed on the basis of the coursework only. As a result, an exemption (as detailed below) is not possible in this subject.

¹Physical Education PAP must generally be completed in school with the exception of cases where a teacher has agreed to be present to supervise an out-of-school activity.

Additional flexibility for 2021 due to COVID-19

Authentication of coursework

The conditions for the completion, acceptance and authentication of coursework are set out in the SEC circulars S68/08 and S69/04 available at www.examinations.ie. Coursework must be conducted under the supervision of a class teacher with the work authenticated by the teacher and principal in accordance with these circulars.

In light of the current exceptional circumstances, in the case of Category 1 coursework, it is acceptable for some or all of this coursework to be completed by the candidate at home, provided that there is oversight and facilitation by the class teacher and the work can be authenticated by the school.

Some additional advice re the authentication of Category 1 coursework:

- Candidates who are absent from school due to COVID-19 should still be able to fully complete the required coursework. Candidates should liaise regularly with their subject teachers regarding their coursework. This should enable the candidate's work to be authenticated in the normal way, as outlined in S69/04.
- Candidates should "maintain records of work in progress" (S68/08, part 3) to enable teachers to authenticate their work.
- Records of work could include some or all of the following:
 - a log of activities giving the dates on which specific tasks were undertaken such as discussions with or feedback from the candidate's teacher,
 - details of research undertaken including books, online resources etc.
 - the notes taken from books/other sources
 - writing up of drafts of particular sections of the report
- Hard copies or electronic records of such activities/interactions should be kept until the candidate has been awarded his/her final result or until the end of the appeals process, if relevant.
- Such material may need to be made available to staff of the State Examinations Commission if the authenticity of a coursework component is called into question.

The advice above also applies to those elements of the Category 2 coursework that are permitted to be carried out at home.

Extensions or Exemptions

It may be possible, depending on the circumstances, to provide an extension to the coursework completion date. Given the range of circumstances, the duration of the extension may vary on a case-by-case basis. However, no matter the circumstances, the completion date may not be extended beyond **Friday 21st May 2021**.

In normal circumstances, exemptions from the completion of coursework are not provided whether for medical or any other reasons and students forfeit the marks for these components. In light of the unprecedented circumstances associated with COVID-19, it may be possible to provide an exemption from the completion of coursework in the case of candidates at a very high risk to COVID-19, where the school has approved an adapted education provision. As with all exemptions, an annotation will apply at certification.

Any cases for extensions or exemptions can only be granted by prior arrangement on a case-by-case basis with the SEC and will be dealt with as set out below.

Scenario 1 - Candidates in receipt of adapted education provision

Where a candidate is at very high risk to COVID-19 and the school has approved an adapted education provision, on health grounds, and the candidate is engaging with remote learning either directly with their school or through a cluster group facilitated by a local Education Centre, they should be in a position to complete Category 1 coursework. The remote learning arrangements should be such that suitable oversight can be provided to facilitate authentication of the coursework component.

In the case of Category 2 coursework, where specialised equipment and rooms are required for the completion of the coursework, candidates at very high risk to COVID-19, where the school has approved an adapted education provision, may be awarded an exemption from the completion of the coursework component and graded on the written examination only. As with all exemptions, an annotation will apply.

The arrangements in this scenario apply only in cases where adapted education provision has been approved by the school in accordance with the guidelines *Continuity of Schooling: Supporting post-primary students who are at very high risk to COVID-19*, (Department of Education and Skills, September 2020). This document is available here: <https://assets.gov.ie/86732/17f3cc49-72ad-4986-98fc-51037d93369e.pdf>. They do not apply in any case where the adapted education provision has been made available in circumstances that fall outside the terms of that guidance.

Scenario 2 - Candidates who are attending school but are necessarily absent due to COVID-19

In cases where a candidate has been necessarily absent from school due to COVID-19, it may be possible to provide the candidate with an extension to the coursework completion date. This extension will facilitate the candidate in making up for time lost due to their absence from school provided that the school can facilitate suitable oversight.

Scenario 3 - Teacher absent from school due to COVID

In cases where a teacher has been absent from school for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, which has impacted on the ability of candidates to progress coursework, an extension on the completion date may be provided.

Scenario 4 - Candidates choosing to absent themselves from school

In cases where a candidate has made a personal decision not to attend school, due to concerns in relation to COVID-19, but which is not supported by medical documentation as described for Scenario 1, or as necessitated as in scenario 2, it will not be possible to provide an exemption or an extension from the coursework components.

In the case of Category 1 coursework, it may be possible for the candidate to complete and submit their coursework provided that there is suitable and adequate oversight by the school and subject teacher to allow authentication of the coursework in line with SEC regulations set out in Circulars S68/08 and S69/04. Given that the criteria for adapted education provision do not apply in these cases, the decision to make such oversight available will be at the discretion of the school. In the absence of this oversight and facilitation by the school and subject teacher, it will not be possible to authenticate the coursework, and the marks will be forfeit.

In the case of Category 2 coursework, given the requirement for the use of specialised equipment and rooms, and in the interests of equity, if a candidate has chosen to absent themselves from school, it will not be possible to complete and submit coursework, and, since such candidates are not eligible for an exemption, the marks will be forfeit.

Schedule of coursework completion dates

Leaving Certificate Coursework, 2021	Completion Date
Physical Education – Physical Activity Project	Mid-January*
Economics	Mid-January*
Design and Communication Graphics	January 15
LCVP Portfolio of Coursework	March 4
Engineering (project)	March 5
Computer Science	March 26
Art	March 19
Physical Education – Performance Assessment	March 24
Technology	March 26
Construction Studies (project)	April 16
History	April 16
Geography	April 16
Religious Education	April 16
Agricultural Science	April 16
Home Economics (Textile Studies Elective)	April 23
Politics and Society	April 30

*Completion date to be confirmed

Junior Cycle Coursework, 2021	Completion Date
Metalwork	March 26
Materials Technology Wood	April 16
Religious Education	April 16
Visual Art	April 16
Technology	April 23

Detailed examination schedules and timetables will issue in due course.

As noted, extensions or exemptions can only be granted by prior arrangement on a case-by-case basis with the SEC. The application process for both an extension to the coursework completion date or an exemption from a coursework component is school based, therefore all applications must be submitted by the school. Applications will not be accepted from candidates or parents.

How to apply for an extension to practical coursework completion date for 2021

Applications for extensions should be made by the school and be sent by email to practicals@examinations.ie

In the case of an individual candidate application, details of the candidate's name and examination number, the subject(s) component(s) concerned, the reason why an extension is required as well as the duration of the extension should be included in the email.

In the case of a class group (for example where a subject teacher is absent due to COVID-19), schools will be required to include details of names and examination numbers for all candidates in the group, details of the subject and component(s) concerned, reason why an extension is required as well as the duration of the extension. The name of the teacher(s) concerned and the reason for his/her absence should also be included.

Schools must have medical evidence available to support each application for a coursework extension and be in a position to make this evidence available to the SEC if requested.

The SEC will notify schools of the of the outcome of the extension application by return email.

How to apply for an exemption from a practical coursework component under the exceptional arrangements for the completion of practical coursework in 2021 in the subjects listed under Category 2

It is very important to remember that an application(s) for an exemption from a practical coursework component should only be made in the case of a candidate(s) who is at a very high risk of COVID-19 and the school has approved an adapted education provision for the 2020/2021 school year, in accordance with the guidelines *Continuity of Schooling: Supporting post-primary students who are at very high risk to COVID-19*, (Department of Education and Skills, September 2020).

A copy of the application form for a Practical Coursework Exemption which must be completed and returned by the school is included in Appendix A, the form may also be downloaded by clicking [here](#).

If you have any question in relation to this circular, please contact us by e-mail at practicals@examinations.ie or by phone at 090 6442867/2741/2747/2861.

Information for parents and students is being developed and will be published on www.examinations.ie shortly.

This information updates and replaces information about extensions and exemptions in previously issued individual subject circulars for the 2021 Examinations.

James Dunning
Assistant Principal Officer
Operations Division – Orals and Practicals.

December 2020

Exceptional Arrangements for the Completion of Practical Coursework, 2021

Application for exemption from Practical Coursework Component Leaving Certificate/Junior Cycle 2021

Candidate Details

Name: _____

Personal Public Service Number: _____

Examination Number: _____

School Details

Name and address: _____

Roll No: _____

Phone Number: _____

e-mail address: _____

Please provide details in relation to the exemption requested on behalf of the candidate

Examination Type (LC or JC)	Subject	Practical Component Description

School Endorsement

I confirm that in the case of the candidate named above, the school has approved an adapted education provision in accordance with the guidelines *Continuity of Schooling: supporting post-primary students who are at very high risk to COVID-19 (Department of Education and Skills September 2020)*.

I enclose a copy of the letter that the school received from a medical professional stating that the student falls into the category of having an underlying medical condition that makes him/her extremely vulnerable from contracting COVID-19 and which was the basis on which the school approved the adapted education provision.

Accordingly, the candidate meets the eligibility criteria for an exemption from the practical coursework described above.

I have informed the candidate that I am applying for an exemption on their behalf and that a corresponding annotation will appear on their statement of provisional results and certificate. I

have received the consent of the candidate (and that of his/her parent or guardian in the case of a candidate under the age of 18) to make this application on those terms.

School Principal

Date

Data Protection

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is a registered data controller with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. *The Personal data provided by you in this application form will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Acts and solely for the purpose of administering the application.*

The personal information will not be disclosed to any external third party without the consent of the candidate or his/her parents except to comply with a statutory requirement. A candidate has the right to request access to his/her personal data as well as the right to rectify and, where applicable, erase any inaccurate, incomplete or any immaterial personal data processed by the SEC.

Completed Application Forms should be returned no later than **29th January 2021** to:

State Examinations Commission
Practicals Section
Cornamaddy
Athlone
Co Westmeath
N37 TP 65

Please mark the envelope: "PRACTICAL COURSEWORK EXEMPTION 2021"

OR

Alternatively, a signed scanned copy of the Application Form(s) together with the supporting medical evidence can be sent by e-mail to practicals@examinations.ie