

Following a Government decision today, Minister for Education Norma Foley TD confirmed that Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations will proceed and students will also have the alternative option of applying for grades accredited by the State Examinations Commission (SEC), to be known as SEC-Accredited Grades.

This decision follows intensive engagement with education stakeholders bilaterally and through the Planning for State Examinations 2021 Advisory Group and sub-group.

This decision ensures for every student a method to assess their learning and attainment at the end of their post-primary education and to progress to higher and further education, and the world of work.

Putting in place both the examination and a corresponding measure of SEC-Accredited Grades is essential to ensuring a fair system, having regard to the extraordinary circumstances of the pandemic and the loss of learning that has occurred for this group of students due to the interruption of in-person teaching and learning during the periods of school closure.

The timetable for the written examinations in June will be published tomorrow by the State Examinations Commission.

For those choosing to take the Leaving Certificate exams, oral examinations will be held during the Easter vacation or shortly after. Coursework will proceed in subjects where these form a normal part of the examination. Additional time will be provided by the SEC for completion of this work. In some subjects the holding of practical examinations will not be possible given public health considerations and this will be advised as soon as possible. Details of revised schedules will be issued to schools in the coming weeks.

The Minister's strongly held view is that students must be afforded the choice as to whether to sit the examinations, including the oral and coursework components, as it would be entirely unfair to students to require them to participate in these elements, given the disruption in learning which has occurred. The oral and coursework components of the examinations will not form part of the Accredited Grade process.

Further details and guidance on both processes will be provided to schools and students and publicised widely over the coming weeks, as these become available.

Minister Foley said: "The Government has today approved a plan which was developed during intensive engagement by my Department with education stakeholders, students, parents, teacher unions, school management bodies and the State Examinations Commission, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, the Higher Education Authority and representatives of higher education, to ensure a fair process so that Leaving Certificate students can progress to the next stage of their lives.

"All stakeholders have worked extremely hard to get to this point. I have listened carefully to all, and we have worked together to find solutions. Students and parents have been clear on the need for both clarity and choice which I believe his decision gives them.

"As requested by the student representatives we explored thoroughly the option of providing the SEC-Accredited Grades to students in advance of the written examinations, but this option is not possible.

"I am conscious that many students are concerned that they have not covered the full curriculum for their subjects in class, due to the interruption of in-person learning caused by the pandemic.

"Everyone wants a system that is fair and that provides the opportunity for real progression for students.

"I want to thank sincerely all the stakeholders involved in the Advisory Group process, and I look forward to continuing to work together over the coming months in further developing and implementing these plans."

All aspects of staging the examinations will be guided by public health advice and schools will be supported and given clear guidance on the staging of the examinations.

The holding of the examinations in November last year, even with a relatively small group of students, has provided valuable experience and insights that will be applied in the coming written examinations.

The results of the Leaving Certificate 2021 process will issue to students within the required timeframe for CAO admission to higher and further education. The Department will engage with the Department of Higher and Further Education, Research, Innovation and Science in this regard. The results will also issue within the timeframe currently required by UCAS.

Junior Cycle Examinations

The Junior Cycle examinations will not be run in 2021. Schools will be provided with guidance on continuing to engage this year group in online learning and assessment during the period of school closure and through in-person learning when schools re-open.

ENDS

Information on the Leaving Certificate Examinations 2021 and the Accredited/Calculated Grades Process

Leaving Certificate Examinations

- **The timetable for the State examinations will be available tomorrow at [examinations.ie](https://www.examinations.ie)**

Schools will be provided with guidance on safe running of the examinations, which will be informed by public health advice in due course.

In August last year, a series of changes were made to assessment arrangements for Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations. These arrangements, which were updated in December, are designed to take account of the disrupted learning experienced by students. This guidance is available [here](#).

SEC-Accredited Process

- **Students will have the opportunity to opt in to the SEC-Accredited Grade process in addition to, or instead of, sitting the Leaving Certificate examination.**

Under the SEC-Accredited Grades process, students will have the opportunity to opt to receive an SEC-Accredited Grade. They can also opt to sit the Leaving Certificate Examination. Students will opt into these processes on a subject by subject basis.