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Bulletin 61

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## Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020

As a key stakeholder in post-primary education, JMB recognises the need to facilitate students in the Leaving Certificate class of 2020 in their progression to further or higher education or the world of work. While the provision of a postponed Leaving Certificate examination in July/August 2020 was initially proposed, owing to the Covid-19 crisis, it is not possible to operate the examinations safely as planned. Existing and anticipated physical and practical requirements to protect the health of all citizens mean that the holding of the examinations is not feasible.

Today, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the Minister has issued a [statement](#) that, in order to achieve the fairest possible outcomes in the current circumstances, he is offering a system of Calculated Grades. A Calculated Grade is a grade that can be provided to students following the combination of school information about a student's expected performance in an examination and national data available in relation to the performance of students in examinations over a period of time.

The process of arriving at a Calculated Grade applies to:

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

A calculated grade results from the combination of two data sets:

- A school-based estimation of an overall percentage mark and ranking to be awarded to a student in a particular subject
- Data available from the State Examinations Commission – this includes data on past performance of students in each school and nationally

The combination of these data sets through a process of national standardisation can determine the grade to be awarded to each student in each subject, thereby resulting in a Calculated Grade.

There are two main phases in the process of arriving at a Calculated Grade:

- A school-based phase
- A national standardisation phase

### *The role of the school*

The role of the school is to provide marks and rankings that reflect:

- An **estimation of the percentage mark** in each subject that each candidate is likely to have achieved if they had sat the Leaving Certificate examination in 2020 under normal conditions

- A **class ranking** for each student in each subject – i.e. a list of all the candidates for a particular subject in a class in the order of their estimated level of achievement.

In providing the above estimated marks and rankings, there will be four main school-based steps:

1. The teacher's estimation of student marks and rankings
2. School alignment of marks for a subject through a subject alignment group comprising teachers who are teaching the subject to Leaving Certificate students this year
3. Oversight of the alignment process by the school principal
4. Transmission of the marks and rankings for national standardisation

Each of these steps is set out in detail in the booklet '**A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020**' available to download from the JMB website (Covid-19 Section/State Examinations) and from the Government website [here](#).

The earlier arrangement (communicated in March) that full marks would be awarded in respect of the orals and music performance tests was predicated on the written examinations proceeding this summer. As the examinations will not proceed, that arrangement will not apply.

In addition to the Calculated Grades process, provision has also been made for a three-stage Appeals Process involving:

- A series of checks that data were correctly entered at school level and correctly transferred to the DES
- A review that the data were correctly received and processed by the DES
- If a candidate remains dissatisfied after notification of outcome of the above two stages, verification of the DES processes by independent appeal scrutineers

Finally, 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.

### **Next Steps**

- We acknowledge that the teacher unions now must consider this process and that the steps as framed in the Guideline document will not be implemented until we have confirmation of their agreement.
- School authorities should nonetheless *fully* appraise themselves of the detail set out in the Guideline document and ensure that every member of their teaching staff is similarly informed by emailing each with a copy.
- Following confirmation that this process is to be implemented, it will be necessary for principals to meet virtually, or at an in-person socially-distanced meeting from 18<sup>th</sup> May, with the relevant teachers (i.e. of the Leaving Certificate class of 2020) to ensure all concerned are fully briefed and are clear about their respective responsibilities.
- Senior Cycle for the current 6<sup>th</sup> year cohort will now conclude, and school authorities might begin to consider how best to engage and communicate with these students.
- Certain students will continue to require access to their school's Guidance and Counselling services, and this should be explored with relevant personnel and communicated to students.
- At a later date, students may wish to access the school to recover locker contents, return book rental texts etc. and guidance will be provided at a later stage in respect of this process.

- The Minister has stated that ‘Calculated Grades are being offered as an option to students in 2020 simply because of the unprecedented impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on their education. The Department of Education and Skills and all the education partners recognise that exceptional measures are required in 2020 for the assessment and certification of students’ learning but that implementation of these measures will not be regarded as a precedent or as agreement to operate such measures in future years’.

Further clarifications, updates and relevant forms etc. will issue to support the Calculated Grades process in schools and JMB will keep members fully briefed on these developments as they arise.

John Curtis,  
General Secretary  
8<sup>th</sup> May 2020