



**2019/20**

**Bulletin 40**

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## **Statement from the State Examinations Commission on the State exams**

Since the Government announcement last week of the closure of schools until the 29<sup>th</sup> March, the State Examinations Commission has been working closely with the Department of Education and Skills on considering alternative arrangements for candidates approaching the state examinations. The planned closure period directly impacts on the scheduled dates for this year's oral and practical performance tests. Following a review of all possible options the Minister has just now announced at a press conference that it has been decided to cancel these tests and to award candidates the full marks for the components in question.

For your attention and information, see below the SEC's press release on this decision. We have also announced an extension of the completion date for project work and coursework which was due for completion on various dates between the 20<sup>th</sup> March and the 24<sup>th</sup> April. Candidates will now have until the 15<sup>th</sup> May to complete this work. The SEC will provide further details on the revised arrangements in the coming days to school authorities and will publish details on our website for the information of students, parents and guardians.

Awarding full marks for the oral and practical performance tests was considered to be the most fair to candidates as it guarantees that no candidate can be awarded a mark lower than they would have achieved in the test. No other approach to generating a result for these components would have given this guarantee. These decisions have at all time been guided by consideration of the best interests of candidates.

Our advice to candidates is that they should continue to prepare for the remaining elements of their examinations as scheduled.

We are continuing to actively monitor the evolving health emergency and are working very closely with the DES in assessing the impact on the examinations system.

John Curtis  
General Secretary  
19<sup>th</sup> March 2020

# STATE EXAMINATIONS COMMISSION

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Impact of School Closures on Examination Activities**

As a result of the current closure of all schools in the State, the impact on the state examination activities scheduled at this time and in the near future has been considered by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills. Consequently, the SEC is confirming;

- The cancellation of the oral and practical performance tests of the Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle examinations, which had been scheduled to take place from next Monday 23rd March to Friday 3rd April, and to award full marks to candidates due to take these tests;
- That schools and candidates are allowed flexibility in relation to the completion of other project work and coursework across a number of subjects which are currently scheduled to be completed in the period 20th March to 24th April. Students will now be allowed to complete this work up to 15th May, which will allow candidates time to complete this work.; and
- That the SEC, in conjunction with the Department of Education and Skills, will continue to monitor the evolving situation very closely and will act in accordance with Government and public health advice

These decisions have been taken on foot of a recommendation from the SEC, working in close collaboration with the Department of Education and Skills, acting in the best interests of students in the exceptional circumstances we find ourselves in. The intention is to alleviate student concerns about the demands they may be facing into in the coming weeks.

The oral and practical performance tests will not be rearranged and full marks will be awarded to candidates for these components. The tests which have cancelled were due to have been held from Monday 23rd March and to run until Friday 3rd April. The tests comprise the Leaving Certificate oral tests in Irish, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Japanese; practical performance tests in Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle Music; and a practical performance test in Junior Cycle Home Economics. Awarding full marks for these cancelled components guarantees that candidates cannot be awarded a lower mark than they would have achieved in the test. The SEC considers that this is the fairest approach in the circumstances. In making these arrangements the SEC is stipulating that candidates will take their final examinations in these subjects at the level they indicated when confirming their subject choices to the SEC earlier this year, other than continuing to allow Leaving Certificate candidates to drop down from Higher to Ordinary Level on the day of the final examination.

In making these recommendations the SEC has been acutely conscious that the period from now until June is an exceptionally busy period for candidates preparing for their certificate examinations especially those getting ready for the high stakes Leaving Certificate. During this period of unexpected absence from school, candidates are bound to have concerns about the demands of examination activity when they return to school particularly as they will wish to refocus their efforts on their preparations for the written examinations commencing on the 3rd June. Student welfare is of utmost concern at this time and the SEC wishes to provide reassurance to students and their parents and to provide clarity about what they need to focus on during their absence from school.

At Leaving Certificate, students are working towards the completion of project work and coursework in various subjects with completion dates between 20th March and 24th April. At Junior Cycle, students may be completing assessment tasks and project work. In recognition of the current loss of class time during which much of the project work is undertaken, schools and

candidates are now being allowed flexibility to complete this work up to 15th May, which will allow candidates time to complete this work.

The SEC and the Department of Education and Skills are continuing to monitor very closely the evolving situation regarding upcoming examination activities.

Candidates should continue to prepare for the practical examinations scheduled for the end of April and early May and the final examinations scheduled for May and June. In the period Monday 27th April to Friday 8th May, the timetable includes practical examinations in Leaving Certificate Art Life Sketching, Engineering, Construction Studies, and Junior Cycle Metalwork. There are also final examinations during May which will see these subjects being completed in their entirety before June (LCVP Link Modules on Wednesday 6th; Leaving Certificate Applied ICT on Wednesday 13th; and Leaving Certificate Computer Science on Wednesday 27th May). The written examinations are due to commence on Wednesday 3rd June.

Delivering the state examinations each year requires a partnership approach between the SEC, teachers, school principals and the education partners. The SEC will continue to engage collaboratively with the education stakeholders and the Department of Education and Skills in the weeks ahead. The SEC will continue to act in accordance with advice from Government and public health authorities in relation to this rapidly evolving public health emergency.

### **Notes for Editors**

The timetables for the final written examinations and the schedules for other examinations and assessment activities (project work; coursework; practical tests, etc.) are available here <https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ex&sc=tt>