



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit**  
**State Examinations Commission**

Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí  
*Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath*

**N37 TP65**



**S30/21**

# GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS 2021

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to schools regarding arrangements for the 2021 Leaving Certificate examinations. The 2021 examinations will be conducted through the network of post-primary schools and other venues recognised by the State Examinations Commission (SEC) to hold the certificate examinations. This includes further education settings; Youthreach settings; prisons; youth detention centres and private colleges as well as recognised second-level schools. The audience for this document is the management authority and the relevant staff of schools and other centres of education at which Leaving Certificate examinations will be held this year. The term school throughout this document means schools and other centres of education.

The successful delivery of the certificate examinations each year depends on a broad coalition of stakeholders including school principals, deputy principals, examinations aides, centre managers and other office holders involved in the logistical and administrative arrangements in schools before and during the examinations period. This year, there has been detailed engagement with the Public Health authorities in planning for the delivery and conduct of all aspects of 2021 Leaving Certificate examinations, including the written examinations. The arrangements set out in this Guidance have been devised in collaboration with the Public Health authorities and are focussed on delivering the 2021 Leaving Certificate while managing the risks of the spread of COVID-19.

The SEC will be issuing detailed General and Day-to-Day instructions to all SEC Appointed Superintendents on their role in the conduct of the examinations. In relation to Public Health, the instructions to SEC Superintendents will reinforce and support the information being provided to schools.

Throughout the year, the SEC has issued details to schools of the reasonable accommodation(s) approved for candidates taking Leaving Certificate examinations. The SEC will be providing a summary report of the decisions already issued to schools (the RACE Matrix) in advance of the commencement of the examinations which will include details of approved special examination centres. A separate document on implementing reasonable accommodations under the RACE scheme will be provided in the week ending 28 May.

A digital *Candidate Information Guide to the 2021 Leaving Certificate* will be provided for candidates, parents and guardians which will include details of the Public Health measures that apply and also the normal information provided to candidates each year about the examinations; the issue of results and appeals. It will be emailed to all candidates and made available on the SEC website in the week ending 28 May.

Queries on the contents of this Guidance document should be emailed to; [LC2021Schools@examinations.ie](mailto:LC2021Schools@examinations.ie) (the email address is not case sensitive).

While email enquiries are preferred, telephone enquiries can be directed to 090-644 2782 or 2783 noting that due to COVID-19 service hours may be curtailed.

The SEC is not in a position to respond to requests for public health advice.

School authorities are required to review the contents of this document and ensure that it is complied with in all respects in the preparations for, and over the course of, the examinations. The SEC may issue supplementary guidance as required.

### Examinations Emergency Helpline

From Tuesday 8 June, schools and SEC Superintendents will have access to an Examinations Emergency Helpline, for the duration of the examinations, for non-routine matters which threaten the security or integrity of the examinations. NOTE: While it may be necessary to notify the Examinations Emergency Helpline of a public-health matter which threatens the security or integrity of the examinations, this Helpline is not for reporting public health matters which arise in the school over the course of the examinations. Such matters should continue to be dealt with by schools as they have been doing over the course of the year.

#### **From Tuesday 8 June Examinations Emergency Helpline 1800 283 071.**

The Examinations Emergency Helpline is exclusively for school management and SEC Superintendents. In order to ensure that service can be provided to schools and Superintendents, the number must not be provided to other members of the school community, to candidates, or to parents/guardians.

For routine matters, the SEC may also be contacted at **090 -644 2700**.

Extended hours of attendance will apply as we get closer to the commencement of the examinations and throughout the examinations period. Out of hours, messages can be left with Security Staff.

### HSE live COVID-19 Principal school line

The arrangements which have been made to support schools in managing COVID-19 during the school year will continue in effect over the course of the examinations period. Post- primary schools will continue to have access to the dedicated HSE live COVID-19 Principal school line over the course of the examinations. Contact details are as follows;

#### **HSE live COVID-19 Principal school line (01) 240 8785**

This line is provided by the HSE for principals to ring in circumstances where they need assistance from Public Health in relation to a confirmed case of COVID-19 within their school community and have not yet heard from Public Health. The phone number will operate 7 days a week, from 8am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and from 10am to 4.30pm Saturday and Sunday. This number is exclusively for school principals for specific COVID-19 related queries pertaining to a positive case in the school community.

### General COVID-19 Queries

Please do contact the HSE Principals line on **(01) 2408785** if you are aware of a case of Covid-19 within your facility, but have not yet heard from the HSE.

Calls to the HSE Principals line or Departments of Public Health directly are for confirmed cases only please. The FAQs for Principals (link [here](#)) should be able to answer most other Covid-19 queries. The Department of Education COVID-19 query line will continue to be available for the month of June to deal with any non confirmed COVID -19 related queries and can be contacted by email at [covid19\\_alert@education.gov.ie](mailto:covid19_alert@education.gov.ie) or phone **(057) 9324461**.

### Visits to Schools by SEC Officials

As is the case every year, an official from the SEC may call to the school to visit the examination centres either before, during or after the examination sessions or to otherwise provide assistance to schools if the need arises. SEC officials will follow public health guidelines in relation to all aspects of the visit including the wearing of face coverings, hand sanitizing and appropriate social distancing. SEC personnel will be required to comply with any visitor policy in place in the school that they are visiting. It should be noted that, depending on the circumstances, the visits may need to be arranged at short notice. SEC personnel will carry formal identification which should be requested by the school authority.

### Contact Phone Numbers and Email addresses

A list of all of the above contact points and for individual sections in the SEC, for raising routine matters, is at **Appendix 1**.

## 2. General Information

In addition to the normal challenges that arise at examinations time, this year the SEC and its agents, with the support and assistance of school authorities, need to ensure that the Leaving Certificate Examinations are held in compliance with Public Health requirements to protect the health of candidates, Superintendents, attendants and others involved in examinations delivery in schools and also to ensure that the arrangements continue to mitigate any risk to examination security and integrity.

Arrangements have been put in place to make the examinations settings as safe as possible. These are built around basic Public Health principles for infection prevention and control and the Public Health measures already in practice in post-primary schools. The SEC is reliant on school authorities and Superintendents in the implementation of these arrangements. Candidates also play a critical role in complying with measures designed to protect their health and safety over the course of the examinations period. A summary of the measures follows, with further details set out in the document:

- Candidates will be assigned to the same desk in the same examination centre for the duration of their examinations other than for specific logistical reasons (e.g. aural examinations).
- Superintendents will be in the same room for the duration of the examinations unless they are required to move rooms by the school authority in an emergency situation. (If there is a need to move rooms schools are required to contact the SEC). (See Section 14.A)
- In the examination centre, all desks will be at least 2 metres apart (front, back and side to side).
- Candidates, Superintendents, school personnel and attendants must wear appropriate face coverings (i.e. masks covering nose and mouth) at all times. A candidate who refuses/fails to wear a mask (other than on authorised medical grounds) will be refused access to the examinations.
- Candidates must observe social distancing in accessing the centre, in the centre, and on their departure from the centre.
- Superintendents will observe social distancing and minimise their interactions to those required for the delivery and integrity of the examinations.

- There will be particular attention to cleaning and sanitation of all room surfaces and any equipment used (e.g. CD players, etc.) before and after examinations based on the normal arrangements that apply in schools.
- There will be attention by all parties to respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene to reduce the risk of transmission.
- All rooms must be adequately ventilated even when taking account of the need to ensure that external noise does not interfere with the examinations.
- Candidates will be required to have their own pens, calculator, etc.

### Examinations: 9 June to 29 June

The main examination session commences on Wednesday 9 June and runs until Tuesday 29 June although not all schools will have examinations running for the full duration of the timetable. The examinations will run to the published examination timetable with some flexibility for alternative scheduling on the day of the examination in certain very exceptional circumstances (i.e. to allow a bereaved candidate to attend the funeral of a close relative). As in other years, schools do not have discretion to make such arrangements locally and all requests for an early or late sitting of an examination require sanction from the SEC.

The scheduling of examinations on Saturdays in May means that the numbers of students and personnel in schools will be minimised so that these final examinations are fully compliant with Public Health guidance. With the co-operation of schools, the LCVP -Links Modules examination and the Department of Education organised Language Proficiency Assessment in the Non-Curricular Languages ran successfully on Saturday 8 May. The Leaving Certificate Computer Science terminal examination is due to take place on Saturday 22 May.

## 3. COVID-19 and the Examinations

Recognising the absolute priority that has been afforded to ensuring that it is possible to run the Leaving Certificate examinations this year in all locations and settings, there are a number of key messages that need to be communicated to minimise the risk of COVID-19 preventing Leaving Certificate candidates from being able to complete their examinations.

### Restrictions on Candidates Presenting for their Examinations

Candidates will not be allowed to present for their examinations in the following circumstances:

- they have been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- they are unwell or have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- they develop COVID-19 symptoms at any stage over the course of the examinations.
- they are self-isolating, have been instructed to self-isolate.
- they are quarantining or restricting their movements.
- they are a close contact of a confirmed case

### Key Messages

Candidates have by now finalised their choices of sitting examinations, receiving Accredited Grades, or both on the Candidate Portal. Leaving Certificate candidates who have made the choice to sit examinations want to be able to exercise that choice in June. The actions of Leaving Certificate candidates between now and the end of the examinations in June could have very serious consequences not only for them, but for others.

While the country is starting to open up, the actions of all involved in minimising the opportunity for COVID-19 to spread will be instrumental in ensuring that Leaving Certificate candidates can be provided with the opportunity to take their examinations in June. The key messages for school staff, candidates, their families and the wider community, which are relevant from now until the end of the examinations on the 29 June, are as follows:

- Continue to follow the basic Public Health advice in relation to social distancing, handwashing/sanitising, respiratory etiquette, and the wearing of face coverings.
- Leaving Certificate candidates should stay within their normal pod, such as their class or family pod.
- When the examinations commence, candidates should stay within their examination centre pod. This includes before, between and after examinations.
- Limit interactions with others even in outdoor settings and avoid gatherings that present risks of COVID-19.
- This includes not getting together with other candidates in study groups in advance of, or over the course of, the examinations.
- Follow the advice about the signs or symptoms of COVID-19; if they or anyone in their household shows signs or symptoms they should isolate and contact their GP for testing, and household members should restrict their movements until the results are known.
- If candidates act without due care, it could mean that they and/or their friends do not get to sit their examinations due to COVID-19.
- Candidates who have not opted to sit any examinations (and who may be finishing school earlier as a result) should be mindful of their friends who intend to sit the examinations.

**In all circumstances, Public Health considerations must take precedence over examinations attendance.**

The Chief Medical Officer Dr Tony Holohan has recorded a video message for Leaving Certificate students to encourage them to stay safe and look out for each other in the run-up to the exams. Please share with your Leaving Certificate students. <https://youtu.be/JnOGBT0C3Fg>

#### 4. Accredited Grades - Contingency Arrangements for Candidates Unable to take their Examinations

Notwithstanding the very best efforts of all concerned, there may be circumstances in which individual candidates or groups of candidates will be unable to take their examinations and will instead have to rely on Accredited Grades.

There is no alternative sitting of the Leaving Certificate in 2021. The safety net of Accredited Grades has been put in place.

Candidates will miss some or all of their examinations if, in advance of, or at any stage during, the period of the examinations, they:

- are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- are unwell and have any of the symptoms of COVID-19.
- are self-isolating or have been instructed to self-isolate.
- are quarantining or otherwise restricting their movements.
- are a close contact of a confirmed case.

Candidates will also miss their examinations for other reasons such as other medical emergencies including hospitalisation. Given the unique circumstances of this year, and restrictions on accessing hospitals, there will be no sitting of examinations in hospitals or other out of school settings as might have been possible in previous years.

Some candidates may experience a bereavement or other trauma over the course of the examinations and will not proceed with their examinations. In the event of a bereavement of a close relative, there continues to be flexibility in scheduling an examination to allow a late or early start to an examination scheduled on the day of the funeral but there will be no opportunity to sit an examination on an alternative date as there was in 2019.

While less likely, circumstances also need to be considered where it is not possible to run the examinations due to a more significant disruption such as a school closure or a local, county, regional or national lockdown.

The vast majority of candidates will have Accredited Grades available to them as a safety net in the event that they are unable to take their examinations, even if they have not opted for Accredited Grades.

Great efforts have been made to ensure that all candidates have the opportunity to be provided with Accredited Grades. In this respect, candidates attending school will have information provided on their behalf by their school for all subjects they are studying in school. The process of providing Accredited Grades to candidates who are out of school learners and to candidates taking subjects outside of school requires these candidates to proactively engage in the relevant Accredited Grades process as set out in the relevant guidance. Accredited Grades cannot be provided, even as contingency, to candidates who are out of school learners or studying subjects outside of school if they have not engaged in the relevant process, or, having engaged in the process, have been unable to provide evidence of their learning in the relevant subject(s) to allow the provision of an estimated mark.

Even if candidates have not opted for an Accredited Grade in a subject or in any of their subjects, the Accredited Grade, provided the candidate is eligible, will be available as contingency in the event that the candidate *cannot* sit the examination in June.

It is important to note that where it has not been possible to provide a candidate with Accredited Grades and where that candidate has not, for whatever reason, attended for their examination(s), their next opportunity to sit the Leaving Certificate will be at the 2022 examinations.

## 5. Role of School Authorities

As in a normal year, the role of the school authority is concerned with the management of the orderly, secure and effective conduct of the Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied examinations in their school. Crucially, and recognising the shared objectives of all stakeholders that these examinations should proceed, the role this year also includes taking all necessary precautions for the safe delivery of the examinations through continued efforts for the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools.

The arrangements for the delivery of the examinations in a manner which is compliant with all Public Health requirements will build on the arrangements which schools have been implementing for the safe and sustainable operation of post-primary schools as set out in the guidance documents which



have been issued by the Department of Education throughout the year. Links to the main school guidance documents are provided at **Appendix 3**.

Non-school settings providing examinations are required to have their own plans and procedures in place in compliance with the Government's *Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19*, and the 'Work Safely Protocol' which has been developed by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Health with guidance documents provided by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA). The 'Work Safely Protocol' reflects the latest advice issued by Government and National Health Emergency Team (NPHET) to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace. The management authorities in these settings should also have regard to the Department of Education guidance for post-primary schools and guidance issued by the Department of Further and Higher Education for Further Education centres.

To prevent the spread of the virus, the role of school authorities in managing COVID-19 outbreaks is as important during the examination period as it has been over the course of the school year. Careful adherence by school management to the published guidance on dealing with COVID -19 outbreaks should ensure that the vast majority of candidates get to sit their examinations. Candidates also have personal responsibility to manage their own behaviour in advance of and during the period of the examinations to ensure that they can attend for all of their examinations. While best efforts are being made to ensure that all candidates who want to sit examinations will be able to sit them, it is entirely possible that not all candidates will be able to do so.

**In all circumstances, Public Health considerations must take precedence over examinations attendance.**

#### **Administrative Requirements**

For both operational and public health related reasons the SEC will require the school authority (Leaving Certificate Aide or member of school management) to collect and copy the centre specific Advice notes and arrange for the return of the original documents to the SEC, for all centres in the school, on up to four separate occasions over the course of the examinations. Instructions and materials for completing this task will be provided separately. (See also 14.C below)

The SEC will be seeking additional flexibility and assistance from schools with the arrangements for the examinations to ensure the smooth conduct of the examinations for all candidates. In particular, schools may be asked to provide Superintendents for main examination centres to cover short, temporary absences by main centre Superintendents (i.e. a half day or 1 or 2 days).

Such absences might arise, for example, to allow the main centre Superintendent to attend for a vaccination appointment; to attend an interview for a teaching position etc (as these tend to be arranged in June). These arrangements will be made through the SEC and communicated to schools noting that the responsibility for the secure custody of examination papers rests with the SEC appointed Superintendents. (See 12.C. below).

If the absence is not short term or temporary, the SEC will seek to appoint a replacement in the first instance.

## 6. Role of the Leaving Certificate Aide for the Written Examinations

To support the running of the 2021 Leaving Certificate as set out in SEC Circular 15/21, schools have been provided with an enhanced range of supports under the Leaving Certificate Aide scheme. Full details of the scheme are set out in the circular and are not repeated here.

The role of Leaving Certificate Aide(s) is to assist the Principal during the state examinations. Each Aide must work under the general guidance of the school management team. School management must be satisfied that the Aide is fully discharging the necessary duties on occasions where the Aide is fully substituting for the Principal (or Deputy Principal) if they are unavailable for any reason.

Otherwise, while it will ultimately be a matter for school authorities to decide the purpose for which the Aide will be engaged in the examinations, it is suggested that they could, for example, be assigned by school management in undertaking some of the following list of duties:

- Working under the guidance of the school management team in preparing for and organising the examinations in accordance with the directions of the SEC and within the Public Health control measures.
- Arranging the collection of Advice Notes and return to SEC as set out in Section 14.C below.
- Engaging in the recruitment by the school of Superintendents of special examination centres, readers and scribes, as required based on local needs, and the oversight of these Superintendents over the course of their work.
- Liaising with the SEC as required over the course of the examinations, including in the arrangements for covering absences of main centre Superintendents.
- Assisting in setting up the centres in advance of the arrival of SEC Superintendents on the 8 June in line with the confirmed centre details provided by the SEC and in line with the public health requirements (2m distancing between desks; cleaning and sanitising arrangements, etc.).
- Assisting, supporting and liaising with the SEC appointed Superintendents.
- Engaging as required in the appointment of student attendants.
- Ensuring that rooms and equipment are acoustically appropriate for aural tests in music and language subjects and any audio-visual LCA tests following the practice set out in Section 16.
- Liaising with the Superintendent or the student attendant in the event of any difficulties occurring during the examination and liaising with the SEC on issues which arise.
- Organising the receipt and secure storage of examination materials.
- Organising the secure storage and return of examination scripts to the SEC if required.
- Organising the receipt and secure storage of examination stationery.
- Putting in place the arrangements for the cleaning of examination centres each evening/morning or during the day following the normal arrangements for cleaning in the school.

The security and custody arrangements for the examination papers are of the utmost importance. SEC appointed Superintendents have the primary responsibility for the secure custody of papers with schools supporting these arrangements through the provision of secure accommodation.

The Education Act 1998 includes criminal offences which relate to the Certificate Examinations. The relevant extract is at **Appendix 3**.

## 7. Dealing with COVID-19 in an Examination Centre

The operation of the Leaving Certificate examinations does not change the measures that schools need to take in preventing and controlling COVID-19. Nor does it change the response of schools to

dealing with an outbreak within the school. School leaders should continue to act calmly, responsibly and in accordance with the directions they are given by the Department of Public Health.

If a candidate, staff member or SEC Superintendent develop symptoms which could be consistent with COVID-19, they should self-isolate immediately, not attend the examination or school premises and discuss the matter with their GP. If this happens shortly before the examinations when the candidate or Superintendent is at the school or during the examination, the candidate or Superintendent should not continue with the examination and should seek medical advice.

The Departments of Public Health will continue to engage with schools, as they have been up to now, if they receive a notification of a case of COVID-19 in someone who attended the school setting whilst infectious. This includes undertaking a Public Health Risk Assessment (PHRA) and identifying cases and close contacts as appropriate.

The maintenance of examination centre pods as set out in this Guidance should assist schools in their engagement with the Public Health authorities and assist with providing information to Public Health as required so that contacts can be identified. In considering the safety of examination centres the following should be noted:

- The examinations are taking place in schools with 6<sup>th</sup> year candidates and the personnel involved in the running of the examinations present. Otherwise, far fewer people will be on the school premises compared to normal.
- 2 metre social distancing will apply between all candidates, and the Superintendent, in an examination centre.
- The SEC is maintaining a high number of examinations centres so that most examination centres will not be operating at full capacity.

It is not up to schools, or the SEC, to seek to identify cases or contacts, or to seek to close examination centres without the direction of Public Health clinicians, or in advance of Public Health undertaking their risk assessments. School management should not take any action nor should they refuse entry to the examinations to those they believe *may* be close contacts; or those they *believe* to be unwell or have symptoms. These determinations will be made by Public Health in a timely manner. Principals can contact the HSE directly on the **HSE Principal's Helpline (Page 4 and Appendix 1)** to get a Public Health Risk Assessment started if they have been notified of a positive case. See also the other contact details set out in **Appendix 1** of this document.

All of the measures set out in this Guidance are designed to make examination centres as safe as possible. By adhering to these measures, the presence of a confirmed case in a centre does not inevitably mean that others present in the centre will be deemed close contacts.

## 8. Wearing of Face Coverings

The wearing of face coverings (i.e. a mask covering nose and mouth) is mandatory for all involved in the Leaving Certificate examinations:

- Examination candidates, SEC Superintendents; special centre Superintendents, examination aides, student attendants, and all other school staff on the school premises when the Leaving Certificate examinations are taking place will be required to wear a face mask at all times.
- Candidates who are normally not required to wear a face mask while attending school, as they have been exempted from this requirement on medical grounds, should be assigned to sit their examinations in a special examination centre.

- Candidates who, on medical grounds, are normally wearing a visor instead of a face mask should also be assigned to sit their examinations in a special examination centre.
- Applications for all such centres should already have been made to the SEC's Reasonable Accommodations Section.
- Candidates who have not been attending school due to refusal to wear face masks will be allowed to sit their examinations provided they wear a face mask.
- A candidate who refuses/fails to wear a mask (other than on authorised medical grounds) will be refused access to the examinations.
- External candidates who are linked to a school only for the purposes of sitting their examinations will be required to apply to the SEC in advance of the commencement of the examinations if they have a medical condition which prevents them from wearing a face mask. All such applications must be accompanied by valid medical certification for review and decision by the SEC. If such an arrangement is approved (including an arrangement to wear a visor instead of a mask), the SEC will assign such candidates to a special examination centre and will notify the school authority.
- There are no circumstances in which Superintendents (either SEC or school-appointed) will be exempted from the requirement to wear a face mask. A visor is not an appropriate face covering for Superintendents. The SEC will require this of its Superintendents and school authorities should not appoint persons to the role of special centre Superintendent if, for some reason, they cannot wear a face mask covering nose and mouth.

## 9. Role of Candidates

In line with the important public health messages set out in Section 3 of this Guidance, candidates should limit their interactions with others in the run up to and over the course of their examinations. Candidates are required to take personal responsibility for their own health to ensure that they have the opportunity to take their examinations.

Candidates must not present for their examinations if they:

- are diagnosed with COVID-19.
- are unwell and have any of the symptoms of COVID-19.
- develop COVID-19 symptoms at any stage over the course of the examinations.
- are self-isolating or have been instructed to self-isolate.
- are quarantining or otherwise restricting their movements.
- are a close contact of a confirmed case.

In any of these circumstances, candidates must not attend the examinations. Candidates will be expected to follow all public health directions and to only undertake their examinations when it is safe for them to do so.

Candidates, their parents/guardians should familiarise themselves with the latest HSE information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, close contacts, the length of time they will need to self-isolate or restrict movements if they come into contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, etc. Information, which is updated as required, is available from the **Parents and Carers Section** on the following HSE webpage <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>. NOTE: This is provided for information only and is not a substitute for medical advice.

Of course, candidates who want to sit the examinations would no doubt be extremely disappointed in the event that they are not able to attend for their examinations due to COVID-19 but public health is

the absolute priority. Accredited Grades (for those eligible to receive them) is the contingency measure that will apply in all circumstances this year.

At the examinations, candidates must:

- Observe 2 metre social distancing and minimise their interactions with others.
- Wear an appropriate face covering (i.e. a face mask covering nose and mouth) at all times while on school premises.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Avoid mingling with other candidates in advance of the start of the examinations, between examinations, and departing the examination centre each day.
- Comply with all other Public Health measures put in place for the examinations.

In normal course, examination candidates are required to comply with the direction of the Superintendents about all examination related matters. In the context of COVID-19, candidates will also be required to comply with the Public Health arrangements in relation to examination centres and with the arrangements for access to the examinations centres each day. Failure to comply with the reasonable directions of a Superintendent, or other person in authority, may lead to the candidate being denied the opportunity to take their examinations noting that Public Health considerations will be an over-arching priority.

*A Candidate Information Guide to the 2021 Leaving Certificate with information on the 2021 Leaving Certificate examinations will be made available to candidates, their parents and guardians. This will include details of the Public Health measures and also the normal examination information provided to candidates each year. It will be emailed to all candidates and published on the SEC's website in the week ending 28 May.*

## 10. Candidates at Very High Risk of COVID-19

- In the case of candidates at very high risk to COVID-19, where the school has already approved an adapted education provision following the provision of medical certification, and the candidate has been receiving their education under this provision, schools should undertake a risk assessment on a case-by-case basis to assess whether the candidate can safely attend their examinations.
- As the examinations are taking place at a time when there are fewer people in the school it may be possible to put in place arrangements for such a candidate to attend for their examinations in a special examination centre with only that candidate and a special centre Superintendent present.
- Any such arrangement should take account of access to the centre by the candidate using access/egress points not generally used by other candidates or by arranging that the candidate times their arrival and departure so as to avoid coming into contact with others.
- In arriving at such a decision, there should be consultation between school management, the candidate, parents or guardians, and medical practitioners and the priority concern should be the health of the individual candidate.
- It is not expected that any new cases of candidates at very high risk to COVID-19 (and consequent requests for an AEP) will be presenting at this time.
- If such candidates are unable to attend the examinations, their Leaving Certificate results will be provided to them on the basis of their Accredited Grades.
- Applications for special examination centres should continue to be made to the Reasonable Accommodations Section of the SEC.

## 11. Managing Candidate Attendance

### A. All Candidates

- Candidates are required to be in their assigned seat in the examination centre at least 30 minutes before the start time of examinations on Day 1 and at least 15 minutes in advance of their examinations on subsequent days.
- A candidate who is late for an examination, can be admitted late to an examination by the Superintendent, up to 30 minutes after the start time, but the time is forfeited.
- Candidates are not allowed to leave the examination centre within the final 10 minutes of the examination.
- Schools may put in place arrangements for managing access to the examinations centres each day.
- Such arrangements should not interfere with the times of the examinations and should not cause candidates to be late for examinations.
- In making these arrangements, schools may not seek to deviate from the published timetable.
- Unless schools or Superintendents are instructed otherwise by the SEC, the examinations must run according to the published timetable. If a delay to the start of an examination has been authorised by the SEC, the lost time should be compensated for at the end of the examination.
- Allowing additional time in an examination that has not been authorised by the SEC represents inappropriate assistance.
- All matters related to late attendance (outside of 30 minutes) and the examinations timetable must be brought to the attention of the SEC for review and decision.
- In very exceptional circumstances, the SEC will consider a request for a late or an early start to an examination **on the day that the examination is scheduled** (i.e. to allow a candidate to attend the funeral of a close relative). The SEC will set out the procedures for such a request in the separate *RACE Implementation Guide* which will issue closer to the start of the examinations. However, in engaging with bereaved candidates on alternative scheduling, schools should be mindful that most candidates will have Accredited Grades available to them as contingency.

### B. Special Notices for External Candidates

External candidates who have entered to sit the 2021 written examinations should have already obtained the permission of the Principal to nominate that school as their school for the purposes of the written examinations. The SEC has issued schools with a preliminary list of the external candidates due to sit examinations at their school for review and confirmation. A final list of confirmed external candidates was provided in the week commencing Monday 10 May. Schools were asked to notify the SEC if any of the candidates listed did not have permission from the school to sit their examinations there.

External candidates will be notified that they are required to comply with the school's COVID-19 protocols. The SEC will provide schools with contact details for these candidates in case they need to contact these candidates in relation to any school specific notices. The SEC will also provide external candidates with a COVID-19 declaration form which these candidates will complete, and present when attending for their first examination in the school. A copy of this form is at **Appendix 5**.

External candidates will be required to present proof of identity to school management on their arrival at the school for the first time. Any one of the following forms of identification is acceptable:

- Driving Licence
- Passport
- Garda I.D. (for over 18s)
- USIT Student Identity Card

- Public Service Card.

External candidates are required to present their ID to the Superintendent for each examination at which they present.

### *C. Reporting Candidate Absences from Examinations*

With the options that have been provided to candidates this year, of sitting examinations, receiving Accredited Grades or both, it seems likely that not all candidates will attend for all of their examinations despite the intentions expressed through the Candidate Portal.

Some will be unable to attend, for health or other medical reasons, or due to bereavement, while others will have changed their minds between now and the sitting of the examinations. If a candidate has opted for both examinations and Accredited Grades and does not attend for their examination(s) for any reason (whether they cannot attend or have chosen not to attend) they will be provided with their Accredited Grade(s) (provided they are eligible<sup>1</sup>).

- Schools should put in place arrangements for parents/guardians or candidates, including external candidates sitting their examinations in that school, to contact the school if the candidate will be absent from an examination or a number of examinations.
- **All such reports should come through the school and candidates should not be instructed to notify the SEC directly of their absences.**
- Candidate absences notified to the school by candidates/parents/guardians should be reported to the SEC Superintendent at the earliest opportunity for recording on the relevant SEC attendance forms.
- If the candidate is assigned to a special examination centre the absence should be reported to the Superintendent of the main examination centre to which that candidate is assigned.
- The Superintendent will record the absence on the Advice Notes, the Centre Roll and other reports which are returned to the SEC for the purposes of reconciliation.
- If the candidate does not attend the examination and has not contacted the school to report the absence, the Superintendent will record the absence as unreported.
- The reporting of absences for COVID-19 reasons should also continue to be managed by the school authority in accordance with existing Public Health guidance.

Some candidates have not opted for Accredited Grades and have only opted to sit the examinations. For these candidates, the reason for their absence is relevant as Accredited Grades are available (to those eligible) as contingency to those who *cannot* sit the examination(s) for unforeseen reasons (COVID-19 related reasons; due to other medical emergencies including hospitalisation; or in the event of a bereavement). A candidate who has opted for the examination only in a subject (and has not opted for an Accredited Grade) and who *chooses* not to sit the examination will not be provided with an Accredited Grade.

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<sup>1</sup> The process of providing Accredited Grades to candidates who are out of school learners and to candidates taking subjects outside of school requires these candidates to proactively engage in the relevant Accredited Grades Process as set out in the guidance. Accredited grades cannot be provided, even as contingency, to candidates who are out of school learners or studying subjects outside of school if they have not engaged in the relevant process, or, having engaged in the process, have been unable to provide evidence of their learning in the relevant subject(s) to allow the provision of an estimated mark.



#### *D. Presenting for Examinations; Candidates who had Opted Out*

If a candidate, who has opted out of sitting an examination, notifies the school they are attending that they have changed their mind and now want to sit an examination in a subject (for which they had been entered), this can be facilitated as follows. In advance of 20 May –

- Notify the SEC Entries Section by email with the details. The SEC will arrange to update the School Roll and other attendance records.
- If the candidate is sitting examinations in other subjects they will be assigned to the centre in which they are taking their other subjects.
- If the candidate had indicated they were not going to present for any examinations then SEC will arrange to assign them to a centre and notify the school.
- After the 20 May -
  - Do not notify the SEC unless the candidate is taking a subject that no other candidate in the school is taking or if the candidate is taking a higher level in that subject to any other candidate in the school. (if this happens notify the SEC to ensure that an examination paper is available)
  - Otherwise, on their arrival in the school on the day of the examination, simply notify the SEC Superintendent of the centre to which the candidate is assigned for their other subjects that the candidate now intends to present for an additional subject.
  - If the candidate had not intended to present for any examinations, the school should identify a main centre which has space to safely accommodate the candidate and notify the Superintendent of that centre.
  - The Superintendent will add the additional subject details to the records of attendance.

If a candidate, not known to the school, presents at the school on the day of the examinations the school should contact the SEC immediately.

## 12. SEC Superintendents

### *A. Appointment and Role of SEC-Appointed Superintendents*

For examinations integrity reasons the SEC is assigning a Superintendent to each main centre in each school.

- Significant efforts are being made in the assigning process to restrict travel by Superintendents noting though that they will not be appointed to their own schools or typically within 15 km of their school/home address.
- The SEC Superintendent is the SEC's agent in the school and, acting within the direction of the SEC, is responsible for the security and integrity of the conduct of the examinations in their centre. The SEC Superintendent will have the same role and responsibilities as in a normal year including responsibility for running of the examinations in their centre; custody of the examination papers and examination scripts.
- There should be open lines of communication between Superintendents, school authorities and the SEC. The SEC has mobile telephone numbers for Superintendents and routinely communicates with Superintendents by text message.
- On arrival at the school the Superintendent must provide their mobile telephone number to the school authority. The Superintendent must also be provided with an emergency contact number for a member of the school management team in case there is a need to get in contact with the school after hours or on weekends.
- The health and wellbeing of candidates and other staff is of utmost importance. SEC-appointed Superintendents must defer to the school authority on all matters related to Public Health.



- SEC Superintendents must seek direction from the SEC if they have any concerns about the running of the examinations in the school. This includes any concerns about tensions between Public Health considerations and considerations related to the security and integrity of the examinations.
- Similarly, schools are directed to engage with the SEC if they have concerns in relation to the delivery of the examinations in their schools.

#### *B. SEC Superintendents and COVID-19*

Every SEC-appointed superintendent will be required to complete and sign a COVID-19 Declaration Form and to present it at the school when they first takes up duty and to otherwise follow all of the public health protocols which apply in the school. **A copy of this form is at Appendix 4.** All SEC-appointed Superintendents must;

- Observe social distancing and limit their interactions with others required for the delivery and integrity of the examination.
- Wear an appropriate face covering (i.e. a mask covering nose and mouth) at all times while on school premises.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.
- Follow the specific instructions for hand sanitising in the distribution and collection of materials to and from candidates.
- Take every precaution with their own health over the duration of the assignment.

It is to be noted that SEC Superintendents have been provided with an allowance for the purchase of masks and hand sanitiser.

If an SEC-appointed Superintendent is displaying any symptoms of COVID-19, suffering from COVID-19, awaiting results of a COVID-19 test or has been identified as a close contact of a positive case and advised to self-isolate or restrict their movements in the days before the examination(s) or on the day of the examination(s), they are instructed not to attend the examination(s) and to notify the SEC immediately.

#### *C. Dealing with SEC Superintendent Absences*

Superintendents will have access to Helpline supports for the duration of the written examinations. If, because of illness or some other reason, Superintendents are unable to carry out their duties, they are required to inform the SEC.

Although, the SEC will have reserve Superintendents available to replace those unavoidably absent, the capacity of the SEC to effect a change of a Superintendent will depend on the amount of notice provided and the location of the school, etc. Pending assistance from the SEC, and depending on the proximity of the next examination, Superintendents may also notify the school directly as it may be necessary for the school to make arrangements at short notice to have an appropriate person take their place if an examination is imminent. On occasion school management, the Leaving Certificate Aide or an experienced special centre Superintendent may need to take on the role of main centre Superintendent until such time as a replacement can be deployed to the school.

If a Superintendent is absent due to COVID-19, they will be asked to notify the SEC of this as there is a process to be followed in relation to notifying Public Health of COVID-19 cases in school settings. The SEC will not share this information with the school but will report this, as required, to the Public Health Authorities. If the SEC contacts a school to report the absence of a Superintendent, the school should

not assume that this is because of COVID-19. Information about COVID-19 cases will come to the school through the appropriate channels of the Departments of Public Health.

Typically, SEC requires Superintendents to be available for the full duration of the examinations period. This year, we are prepared to allow flexibility to allow a short absence in certain circumstances, for example, to allow Superintendents time to receive their COVID-19 vaccine; to attend an interview for a teaching position; etc. School authorities will be asked to assist with such short-term absences of main centre Superintendents.

SEC Superintendents will be required to notify the SEC of any absences, regardless of the duration, and the SEC will engage with schools individually on arrangements for replacing the Superintendent. Given the security risks associated with access to examination papers, school authorities and Superintendents are not authorised to make such arrangements locally. All such arrangements will be co-ordinated by the SEC in the first instance.

## 13. Establishment of Examination Centres

### A. Main Centres

Revised arrangements for the establishment of examinations centres were set out in SEC Circular S07/21. The details of the centres to be established in schools, and the candidates assigned to those centres, will be confirmed to the school by the SEC in the week commencing 17 May. The rooms to be used and the candidates assigned to each centre must accord with the SEC's directions. In setting up the centres, schools are reminded that the following arrangements are required;

- There must be clearance of at least 2 metres between them and the next candidate (front, back, and side to side) and from the Superintendent's station.
- In a standard 49m<sup>2</sup> classroom, the maximum density is 10 candidates plus the Superintendent.
- Multiple centres may be located in school gyms, and other large areas (e.g. libraries, central areas, etc.) subject to the 2m physical distancing rule and an overall centre density rule of no more than 50% of the numbers possible in that room if applying 2m distance per candidate. For example, in a gym of 594m<sup>2</sup> a maximum of 72 candidates and Superintendents in no more than three centres of 23 candidates and one Superintendent in each centre.
- In locations with multiple centres, the individual centres must be separated from each other by a valley of at least 4 metres.
- Rooms, gyms and other areas/locations may only be used as centres provided that they can and will be adequately ventilated and the assessment of suitable centres must have regard to the impact of likely environmental noise (e.g. grass-cutting, traffic and building noise, etc.) at the time that the examinations are being held.
- Schools were asked to undertake their own assessments to assess the suitability of the ventilation arrangements in relation to rooms without windows which can open.
- Centres will not be consolidated as in other years so the room must be available for the duration of the examinations in the school.
- All examination centres should be on the school premises.

Due to these revised arrangements, and as might have been anticipated, schools are using a far greater proportion of their accommodation footprint for the 2021 Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied examinations. However, the total number of centres in schools this year is similar to the number of centres in other years when Leaving Certificate and Junior Cycle examinations were being held.

### *B. Special Examination Centres - Reasonable Accommodations*

- Some candidates are being accommodated in special examination centres approved by the SEC under the RACE scheme. Schools are also required to set up all special examination centres, in line with Public Health requirements. This includes 2 metre social distancing, respiratory etiquette, hand washing/sanitising, attention to cleaning and sanitation, etc.
- The SEC will be providing a summary report of the decisions already issued to schools (the RACE Matrix) in advance of the commencement of the examinations which will include final details of approved special examination centres.
- In the meantime, schools can plan for their special centre requirements based on the individual approvals received during the year and the candidate matrix of examination entries confirmed by candidates on Phase 2 of the Candidate Portal which was received in schools in the week of 10 May.
- The school is required to locally-appoint Superintendents to special examinations centres and to undertake duties as Reader and/or Scribe as appropriate.
- A separate guidance document for schools on the implementation of access arrangements approved under the RACE Scheme will be provided. This includes the Instructions for the Superintendents of Special Examination Centres including those undertaking the duties of Reader and/or Scribe.
- The Leaving Certificate late RACE Emergency application form (RA4) for the 2021 examinations is available on the SEC website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie). The application window for all other RACE applications has closed. The only applications that will be accepted are those relating to true emergencies, i.e. injuries or similar emergencies arising close to or during the period of the written examinations (e.g. broken bone, other medical emergency). Schools will note that this year it will not be possible to arrange examination sittings in hospitals.
- School authorities should take particular care to ensure that requests for special examination centres are not made on foot of *concerns* about COVID-19. The objective of the SEC and school authorities has been to ensure that all candidates are able to take their examinations safely.

### *C. Assignment of Candidates to Examination Centres*

The SEC used the information provided by schools following the issue of SEC Circular 07/2021 to assign all candidates in the school, irrespective of their choices of examinations or Accredited Grades, to an examination centre. Following the update of the data from Phase 2 of the Candidate Self Service Portal, the SEC has reviewed and finalised the assignment of candidates to centres; and closed any centre in which no candidate is due to sit an examination.

- In the week ending 21 May, the SEC will provide each school with a final Centre Report with details of their centres (the centre number, name of the room, and the candidates assigned to each centre) based on the most recent information from the portal setting out which candidates are due to sit which examinations.
- Other than closing centres, where none of the assigned candidates are now sitting examinations, the SEC will not seek to consolidate centres even if the number of candidates due to sit examinations in a centre has reduced significantly. As the over-arching priority has been Public Health considerations, having more centres with fewer candidates in each centre will better protect candidates, Superintendents, and other school staff.
- The linking of candidates to an assigned examination centre is the cornerstone of the SEC's capacity to ensure its core function; that of getting the right result to the right candidate.
- Schools do not have authority to close or merge centres and the only changes to the assignments that will be considered are the reassignment of candidates from a main centre to a special examination centre should the need arise.

- Due to operational requirements and the lead times involved, the arrangements for the packing of examination papers and stationery have been on the basis of the initial data provided to the SEC; i.e. providing for all candidates to take examinations. That is, these materials have been overprovided for the number of candidates likely to sit examinations.

#### *D. Maintaining Examination Centres as Pods*

- In picking suitable accommodation for the examination centres, schools have been asked to consider, as far as is reasonably practicable, maintaining each centre as a pod for the duration of the examinations in each centre; that is, the candidates in the centre from the first day of the examinations stay in that group until the last day and avoid interaction with other groups.
- Candidates should be assigned to the same desk in the same centre for the duration of their examinations.
- The subjects Irish, the Modern Foreign Languages, Music, LCA Social Education and LCA English and Communications have aural and audio visual tests. If candidates taking these examinations have to move from their main centre to a room in which the acoustics/equipment are more appropriate, there should be particular attention to ensuring that there is no mixing of pods. See also Section 22 below which sets out the measures which schools need to take in the preparations for the aurals and audio visual tests.
- Where it is not practicable for pod cohesion to be maintained for the duration of examinations in a centre, schools are asked to develop controlled arrangements to provide for these situations, similar to the arrangements which apply in schools when candidates have to move to rooms with specialised facilities or equipment. The movement of candidates in and out of the examination centres should be managed in schools so as to avoid these pods mixing with each other to the greatest possible degree.
- It is recognised that the arrangements for seeking to ensure pod cohesion are subject to practical limitations and considerations in schools. For example, there can be necessary attendance in examination centres by those other than the Superintendent and the candidates assigned to that centre (e.g. an official from the SEC at any time) or a member of the school authority (until the examinations gets underway or if requested by the Superintendent). The duration of any such attendance will be minimised.

## 14. Role of Schools in the Conduct of the Examinations

### *A. Examination Papers*

The SEC Superintendent appointed to each centre has the responsibility for the custody of the examination papers for their centre. Schools are asked to facilitate the arrangements required for Superintendents to ensure the secure custody of examination papers this year. The SEC has already contacted a number of schools which have relied on off-site storage of examination papers boxes in previous years. Work is ongoing on alternative arrangements with these schools taking account of the need to minimise the level of movement into and out of the school, as well as restricted access to the off-site locations due to COVID-19.

There are some important changes for schools to be aware of in the arrangements for secure custody of the examination paper boxes this year.

1. Superintendents will collect examination papers on three occasions;
  - a. Tuesday 8 June
  - b. Sunday 13 June
  - c. Sunday 20 June

Whether Superintendents have to collect papers on all three occasions will depend on the duration of the examinations in that centre. On Tuesday 8 June, Superintendents will be required to attend the school to meet school management; check the contents of their examination paper box and stationery box; set up the centre; secure their examination papers box, etc.

2. Schools are required to be open on the Tuesday and, as required, on each of the following two Sundays, to facilitate access to the school and the secure custody location for the examination paper boxes in the school by the Superintendents. On each of the three days, Superintendents will be required to meet their partner Superintendent at the school in order to carry out a check on the examination papers received before arranging for storage in the secure location.
3. Additional Leaving Certificate Examination Aide days and other financial supports (cleaning, caretaking, PPE, light and heat) have been provided to schools for opening on the two Sundays. (Details and terms are contained in SEC Circular 15/21).
4. All SEC Superintendents assigned to a school will have the same box collection time from the regional Hub. School management and SEC Superintendents should engage with each other to ensure that school management is aware of the time of their approximate arrival time at the school on each collection day.
5. Schools are asked to review the secure location in the school for the custody of the boxes of examination papers to assess whether changes to the arrangements for the collection of papers from the secure room are required in order that Superintendents have safe access to the boxes of examination papers in advance of each examination session.
6. If the secure room is not large enough for social distancing between Superintendents, then schools should arrange for staggered attendance by Superintendents allowing sufficient time for retrieval of the examination paper packet(s); carrying out their checks; and being in attendance in their centre at the required time in advance of each examination.
7. If extended opening of the secure room is required then the key holder must be in attendance throughout and must ensure the security of the room at all times. Under no circumstances should the room be left unattended.
8. Secure locations in schools have been approved by the SEC over time. Schools do not have discretion to make any changes to the location at which the boxes of examination papers will be stored. **If school management has concerns about the secure examination paper location as a result of the arrangements required they must contact the Centres Section of the SEC immediately.**
9. Access to the secure room must be provided in advance of the morning and the afternoon sessions. Superintendents are only allowed to collect the examination papers for the examination session that is about to commence. Superintendents are not allowed to collect the afternoon examination paper packets in the morning.
10. The normal Superintendents' partnering system will be in place for examination paper packet validation. This requires individual Superintendents to collaborate with a nominated Superintendent prior to each examination sitting in order to validate that the packets of examination papers they have each taken from the examination paper boxes are correct for the session next scheduled to commence. Suitable, secure accommodation needs to be made available to all Superintendents to meet their partner Superintendent in advance of each examination to complete this important function in line with Public Health requirements.
11. Candidates in the centre will continue to validate the opening of the examination papers prior to the commencement of each examination session. Candidates will be asked to use their own pen for this purpose.

### *B. Examination Stationery*

Arrangements have already commenced for the delivery of the boxes of examination stationery to schools. The box contains all of the examination stationery required in each centre for the duration of the examination in that centre. One box of stationery has been provided for each examination centre. The SEC uses the logistics firm Masterlink for this process and the boxes will begin arriving in schools in the week beginning Monday 10 May. Under no circumstances should the boxes be opened by schools.

The boxes should be securely stored in the school until the arrival of the SEC Superintendent(s) on Tuesday 8 June and provided to the Superintendent at that time. Superintendents are required to check that the tamper evident seals are intact on receipt. The boxes are made of hard plastic which means they can be sanitised by the Superintendents as required.

Additional materials for the centre Superintendent may be provided to schools in advance of the commencement of the examinations by the SEC.

### *C. Return of Advice Notes*

This year the SEC will require the assistance of the school authority (Leaving Certificate Aide or other member of the school management team) in arranging to obtain each Superintendent's Advice Notes at the end of each examination session or at the end of the day. The Advice Note is the record completed by the Superintendent at each examination session which records the attendance by candidates; changes of levels; and other important information. Given the choices available to candidates this year, candidate attendance for the examinations is likely to be unpredictable.

The SEC requests the assistance of schools this year in collecting these important documents and returning them to the SEC on 4 specific dates over the course of the 15-day examinations period as follows:

1. Friday 11 June	2. Wednesday 16 June
3. Wednesday 23 June	4. Tuesday 29 June

The data contained on these documents is essential to the orderly processing of the examination results.

The other reason that Superintendents will be asked to provide their Advice Notes to the school authority is that this will provide the record of who was in the examination centre for each session in the event that it is necessary to undertake a Public Health Risk Assessment to facilitate contact tracing. The school will be asked to make a copy of the Advice Notes for retention in the school and to return the originals to the SEC. Further details of this process will be provided separately.

### *D. Hygiene Practice for the Distribution and Collection of Materials by Superintendents in the examination centres*

At each examination session, the examination papers, which come sealed in plastic tamper evident envelopes, will be opened and distributed to candidates by the Superintendent while the candidates are seated in the centre. The completed scripts will be collected by the Superintendent at the end of the examination from candidates and returned to the SEC in a tamper evident plastic envelope.

Superintendents will adhere to the hand hygiene protocols and the use of hand sanitiser is very important to mitigate any risks associated with the handling of examination materials.

Superintendents will be required to sanitise their hands at each of the key stages of the examination delivery including:

- Before and after collecting their examination papers from the secure storage location.
- Before and after undertaking the validation of papers with their partner Superintendent.
- Before and after validating the opening of the packet in the centre.
- Before and after distributing stationery to candidates.
- Before and after distributing examination papers to candidates.
- Before and after collecting scripts from candidates.
- Before and after packing the scripts into the return envelopes.
- Before and after visiting the post office to post the scripts.

## 15.Appointment of Student Attendants

Student attendants, nominated by schools, assist the Superintendents throughout the examinations. Student attendants have a range of assigned duties including assisting in the setting up of the centres; escorting candidates to and from the bathroom; by acting as a link between the examination centre and the school authority.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the maximum number of candidates assigned to any main examination centre for the 2021 examinations is 23. Attendants should be appointed on the basis of 1 attendant per main examination centre noting that the SEC does not provide for attendants for special examination centres. In light of the small number of candidates likely to be in attendance in examination centres each day the SEC did consider that attendants should be assigned to multiple centres. However, in light of public health risks associated with mixing of examination centres, a one to one assignment will be safer for all concerned.

In making decisions to assign attendants, schools should refer to the number of candidates per centre that appear on the Centre Report which will issue from the SEC shortly. While it is likely that the numbers of candidates will fall between now and the examinations, the SEC recognises the need for schools to have data on which to plan their decisions.

Student attendants are required to comply with all of the Public Health measures required to support the safe delivery of the examinations including the wearing of face masks; hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, etc. The school should brief the student attendants on the Public Health arrangements which will apply in the school in the delivery of this role. The SEC Superintendent will also meet with and brief the student attendant on their role.

## 16.Planning for the Aural and Audio Visual Tests

There are aural tests at Leaving Certificate in Irish, French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Music and LCA Social Education and LCA English and Communications. All candidates taking these examinations should be able to hear the CD and hear and see the DVD clearly whether they are in a main centre or a special examinations centre. To avoid issues arising during the test, and disruption for your candidates, schools are required to carry out the following preparation and checks in advance of the examinations:

- Every main and special examination centre must have equipment available to facilitate the playing of CDS or arrangements must be in place for candidates to sit their aural tests(or audio-visual) in another room.



- With public health restrictions in force this year, it is far preferable that candidates do not have to move rooms for the aural tests (or audio-visual). To ensure the cohesion of examination centres as pods, schools have been asked to ensure, as far as practicable, that the selected rooms have the necessary equipment and facilities to provide for all of the examinations in the centre.
- If candidates taking aural (or audio-visual) examinations have to move from their main centre to a room in which the acoustics/equipment are more appropriate, there should be particular attention to ensuring that there is no mixing of pods. Social distancing of 2m between a candidate and the next candidate (front, back, and side to side) must be maintained in all examination accommodation including any rooms used for the aurals (or audio-visual).
- Candidates taking the Irish examination at Foundation level have their own CD specific to that level so if these candidates are in a centre with candidates taking Higher or Ordinary level, they will have to leave their centre while remaining within their centre pod for this test. (That is, do not mix candidates from multiple centres even if they are all taking Foundation level Irish). They should stay in that centre for the written paper as well.
- All playing equipment must be well maintained, in full working order and must be thoroughly tested in advance of using in the live examinations.
- It is not enough to test the equipment – the equipment should be tested in the room in which it will be used to check the sound and the acoustics. This applies to both main and special examination centres. Ideally, this would be done by class teachers with candidates in the rooms so that candidates and school authorities can be confident the CD/DVD will be clearly heard on the day of the test.
- The requirement to pre-test equipment and acoustics applied to main centres, including those established for Foundation level Irish, and special examination centres.
- Schools should run through the arrangements for playing the CDs/DVDs with the main centre Superintendents on the day of their arrival in the school, leaving nothing to chance on the day of the first aural (or audio-visual) examination. Please ensure the Superintendents have access to the playing equipment as needed and are instructed in its operation.
- In the event that there is a difficulty with the playing of the CDs/DVDs on the day of a test, Superintendents are required to make a report on this and to include details of the preparatory work undertaken by the school. The school will be provided with access to the report and will have an opportunity to take a copy of the report if they wish. Schools may wish to provide additional information direct to the SEC. Queries related to the aural tests(or audio-visual) during the course of the examinations should be sent by email to [race@examinations.ie](mailto:race@examinations.ie).

### **Set Up and Testing**

CDs can be played on:

A. **Standard CDs players** with the following features:

- Clear display screen showing track number playing.
- Facility to select which tracks to play.
- Mains powered with battery back-up.
- Models with integrated or standalone speakers are appropriate.

B. **Computers or laptops** which are less than 10 years old (PC and Apple Mac) with the following features:

- CD drive.
- WINDOWS MEDIA PLAYER or ITUNES installed.
- Connected to an external amplifier and speakers. (The volume available on computers without use of speakers will not be adequate to fill a room or hall, as they are designed for personal use).



**NOTE: A similar approach to setup and testing should be put in place for examinations in LCA Social Education and LCA English and Communications to ensure that candidates can hear and see the DVD satisfactorily.**

- All examination CDs/DVDs are produced in monophonic format. There is no possibility of one candidate hearing a different balance in that centre. It should also be noted that in relation to balance and bass controls these should be set at the central position or lower. In particular facilities like mega bass should not be used.
- Ideally, in an exam hall setting, the CD/DVD player should have separate loudspeakers detached from the player, for better quality sound, and to ensure vibration at higher volumes does not cause the CD/DVD to skip. Care should be exercised in the placing of the speakers to facilitate all candidates and to avoid sound distortion.
- Where an integrated model (i.e. built-in speakers) is operated care should be exercised so that in determining the appropriate sound levels, sound distortion is avoided. The player should have adequate volume to reach all corners of the exam room or hall at no more than 75% volume.
- In testing sound levels, it is recommended that the player volume control should be operated below the maximum sound level possible. Maximum volume may lead to distortion and skipping.
- If schools decide to augment the sound in large rooms through the use of amplification (as might be the cases in a gym with more than one centre) this must also be thoroughly tested by the school in advance of the examinations.
- External noise should be eliminated to the greatest degree possible for the duration of the aural tests.
- Maintenance or renovation work being carried out in the school or school vicinity should be suspended for the duration of the examinations.

#### **Students with special needs (hearing impairment)**

- Language laboratories or individual headphones, if available, should be reserved for candidates with impaired hearing.
- A candidate with a hearing impairment may indicate to the Superintendent the position in the centre which suits them best.

#### **Appointment of additional superintendents**

If the school needs to establish separate centres for the aural (or audio-visual) tests, the school should arrange the appointment of an additional Superintendent(s). Any additional Superintendent appointed should be paid the appropriate fee by the school, which will be reimbursed by the SEC, on receipt of the relevant claim form signed by the school authority and countersigned by the Superintendent.

## Appendix 1. Leaving Certificate 2021 Contact Details

1. Queries related to the contents of this Guidance document should be emailed to [LC2021Schools@examinations.ie](mailto:LC2021Schools@examinations.ie).
2. Examinations Emergency Helpline for Schools and SEC Superintendents  
From Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June 1800 283 071.
3. Non confirmed case COVID -19 related queries  
Email: [covid19\\_alert@education.gov.ie](mailto:covid19_alert@education.gov.ie) Phone: **(057) 9324461**
4. HSE live COVID-19 Principal school line 01-240 8785. Confirmed COVID-19 cases only.
5. SEC Main Phone Number  
Email: [info@examinations.ie](mailto:info@examinations.ie) Phone: 090 -6442700
6. Reasonable Accommodations, including Special Examination Centres, and Covid related queries arising for candidates.  
email: [race@examinations.ie](mailto:race@examinations.ie) Phone: 090 644 2781.
7. Examination centres.  
Email: [centres@examinations.ie](mailto:centres@examinations.ie) Phone: 090 644 2793
8. Examination Entries including External Candidates  
Email: [entries@examinations.ie](mailto:entries@examinations.ie) Phone: 090 644 2702.
9. Payments for Schools  
Email: [financial@examinations.ie](mailto:financial@examinations.ie) Phone: 090 644 2796.
10. Accredited Grades. Department's Helpline on 057 932 4461 (select option 2), Mon – Fri, 10 am to 5 pm, or by email to [LCinfo@education.gov.ie](mailto:LCinfo@education.gov.ie).

## Appendix 2. The Education Act 1998

The Education Act 1998, specifies and defines criminal offences which relate to the certificate examinations. A copy of the relevant provisions is reproduced here for your information.

*Education Act, 1998. Part VIII, Offences.*

52.- (1) A person who-

- (a) knowingly and without lawful authority publishes an examination paper or part of such paper to any other person prior to the holding of the examination concerned,
- (b) has in his or her possession without lawful authority an examination paper or part of such paper prior to the holding of the examination concerned,
- (c) carries out any duties relating to the preparation of examination papers and knowingly and without lawful authority provides a candidate for an examination or any other person with information concerning the material prepared by him or her in the course of those duties with the intention of conferring an advantage upon a candidate over other candidates,
- (d) knowingly and wilfully credits a candidate with higher marks than the marks to which that candidate was entitled with the intention of conferring an advantage on that candidate over other candidates,
- (e) knowingly and maliciously credits a candidate with lower marks than the marks to which that candidate was entitled,
- (f) personates a candidate at an examination or knowingly allows or assists a person to personate a candidate at an examination,
- (g) knowingly and maliciously destroys or damages any material relating to an examination,
- (h) knowingly and maliciously obstructs any candidate or a person engaged in the conduct of an examination or otherwise interferes with the general conduct of an examination,
- (i) knowingly and without lawful authority alters any certificate or any other record, including a record in machine-readable form, containing the results of an examination or,
- (j) knowingly issues or makes use of any certificate or other document which purports to be a document issued by the person or body under whose authority the examination was conducted and to contain the results of an examination knowing that those results are false shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person who knowingly aids, abets, counsels or procures another person to commit any offence under subsection (1) or conspires with another person for the commission of any such offence shall be guilty of an offence.

(3) A person who is guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable-

- (a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding €1,905 or (at the discretion of the court) to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months, or to both such fine and such imprisonment, or
- (b) on conviction on indictment, to a fine not exceeding €6,350 or (at the discretion of the court) to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both such a fine and such imprisonment.

(4) No action shall lie against an examiner in respect of anything done by him or her in good faith and in pursuance of his or her functions as an examiner

## Appendix 3. COVID-19 – Main School Guidance Documents

Links to the main school guidance documents

COVID19 Response Plan for post primary schools <https://assets.gov.ie/83312/6c36aac-22fc-44fd-a4be-88cea4db82d6.pdf>

FAQs for school principals or designated contact person <https://assets.gov.ie/88265/66f357e5-087d-4e27-af5d-d9f0c8897851.pdf>

COVID-19 Educational Settings cases and close contacts definitions <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/casedefinitions/COVID-19educationalsettingscasesandclosecontactsdefinitions/>

Schools Pathway for COVID-19: The Public Health approach <https://assets.gov.ie/86158/573fe99d-e847-4bb6-b865-456e5c03b7e4.pdf>

COVID-19 Management of contacts of cases in the school setting <https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/educationguidance/COVID-19%20Management%20of%20contacts%20of%20cases%20in%20the%20school%20setting.pdf>

Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools V2 30 November 2020 [www.gov.ie](http://www.gov.ie) - [Practical Steps for the Deployment of Good Ventilation Practices in Schools \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

## Appendix 4: COVID-19 Self Declaration Form –Superintendent at the Leaving Certificate Examinations

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, SEC appointed Superintendent must complete and sign this form and bring it to the school on their first day of attendance at the school.

Please print your details; answer the questions which follow; and sign the form.

**Superintendent Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mobile Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Centre Number** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Name and Roll No** \_\_\_\_\_

If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice and you cannot proceed with the proposed superintending work until you are medically certified to do so. You should also notify the SEC immediately. If at any stage during the examinations you can answer yes to these questions you must not attend for superintending duties; and must instead take medical advice and notify the SEC.

	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness, flu like symptoms or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days?		
2	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3	Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?		
4	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
5	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?		
6	Have you been advised by your doctor that you are in the very high risk group?		

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test and have not been advised to restrict my movements.

Please note: The school is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and this data will be held securely in line with our retention policy.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5: COVID-19 Self Declaration Form –External Candidate at the Leaving Certificate Examinations

To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, external candidates must complete and sign this form and bring it to the school on the first day on which they sit examinations at that school or hall as appropriate.

Please print your details, answer the questions which follow, and sign the form.

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Centre Number \_\_\_\_\_

School Name and Roll No \_\_\_\_\_

If the answer is Yes to any of the below questions, you are advised to seek medical advice and you cannot attend the examinations until you are medically certified to do so. You should also notify the school of your absence immediately. If at any stage over the course of the examinations you can answer yes to these questions you must not attend for examination.

	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you have symptoms of cough, fever, high temperature, sore throat, runny nose, breathlessness, flu like symptoms or loss or change to your sense of smell or taste now or in the past 14 days?		
2	Have you been diagnosed with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days?		
3	Are you a close contact of a person who is a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days?		
4	Have you been advised by a doctor to self-isolate at this time?		
5	Have you been advised by a doctor to cocoon at this time?		
6	Have you been advised by your doctor that you are in the very high risk group?		

I confirm, to the best of my knowledge that I have no symptoms of COVID-19, am not self-isolating or awaiting results of a COVID-19 test and have not been advised to restrict my movements.

Please note: The school is collecting this sensitive personal data for the purposes of maintaining safety within the workplace in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The legal basis for collecting this data is based on vital public health interests and maintaining occupational health and this data will be held securely in line with our retention policy.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_