



Dear 6<sup>th</sup> year student / parent / guardian,

I would like to outline some of the key points coming from the recently published 'A Guide to State Examinations and Accredited Grades for Leaving Certificate 2021' document from the Department of Education.

The school's advice to students on accredited grades is that everyone should opt to be included in the accredited grades process as we can see no downside to it for the student. In the unfortunate scenario whereby a student tests positive for COVID-19 or is deemed a close contact of a positive covid case, over the duration of the exams, it would not be possible for them to sit the actual exam. In this situation, the fall back is the accredited grade. We cannot emphasise enough the importance of students signing up for an accredited grade in all of their subjects.

The school also strongly advises all students to prepare for, and sit, the Leaving Certificate Examination written papers in June - that decision is ultimately for you to make, however it gives students the best opportunity to get the highest marks that they can.

Teachers will begin the formal accredited grades process from May 14<sup>th</sup>. The State Examinations Commission (SEC) will be asking teachers to provide "an estimation of the percentage mark in each subject that each candidate is likely to have achieved if they were to sit the Leaving Certificate Examination in 2021." The estimation mark is only the first step in the SEC's process for producing the accredited grade. The full process is outlined in the Departments document which can be accessed using the link below.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/81e76-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021/>

**Students need to continue to engage in all class activities if opting for Accredited Grade only.** Where oral/practical work is taking place in class then all students should continue to engage regardless of whether they have chosen to sit the Leaving Cert written paper - and take the related additional components - or not. Performance in oral/practical work is one of the components teachers have been asked to use when providing an estimated mark. The student needs to provide evidence of their performance and attainment by taking part in class. As we get further information in relation to orals and practicals we will update you.

*"In reaching their estimate in subjects with more than one component, teachers will have regard to the written examination and the additional component. The estimation will also take into consideration the appropriate weightings for all of the components. Teachers will be asked to formally record their consideration of each component part. Teachers' knowledge and*

*experience of the curriculum and the examination are essential to this process of arriving at the estimated mark”*

Tuition for students sitting the Leaving Certificate written exams will continue until May 28th.

The SEC’s Candidate Portal is due to go live from March 8th through which students will opt for accredited grades, to sit the Leaving Cert written papers and the related additional components or both.

### **Pre Exams**

The Department of Education has advised schools not to hold Pre-exams so we will not be proceeding with full Pre-exams. Refunds will be issued to parents/guardians who paid for the pre-examinations in the coming weeks.

### **State Examinations**

Students opting to sit the Leaving Cert written papers and the related additional components should note the following:

- We are awaiting further guidance on the running of orals and practicals. We do know that oral exams will be held between March 26th and April 15th. Orals will be conducted and recorded by teachers from our own school but will be marked by SEC examiners.
- Coursework deadlines across all subjects have been extended. Coursework will be completed by students and submitted to the SEC for marking by SEC examiners. The extended dates have not yet been made available to us in school.
- In response to the disrupted learning experienced by students during the periods of school closures in 2020 and 2021 adjustments have already been made to the assessment arrangements for post-primary students taking State certificate examinations in the 2020/21 school year. Further adjustments are now to be made to the written papers. We have not yet received information on these adjustments.

### **Accredited Grades**

Students opting for an accredited grade should note the following:

SEC Accredited Grades will be provided:

- *In addition to examinations:* As far as possible, students will be provided with SEC Accredited Grades for all subjects for which they are entered in the Leaving Certificate examinations in 2021 (via the online portal), provided that adequate evidence is available on which to base an SEC Accredited Grade.
- *To students who are unable to sit the examinations at the scheduled time:* For example, some students may be at very high-risk from COVID-19; some students may be required to self-isolate and/or restrict their movements for all or part of the period of the examinations; or they may have a bereavement or other medically certified illness which prevents them from sitting the examinations. Having the SEC Accredited Grade will enable the student to receive a grade in such cases.
- *When it is not possible to take the examinations:* It may not be possible to run the examinations in one or more examination centres because of COVID-19 related restrictions. In such cases, students will instead rely on an SEC Accredited Grade.

***There will be no opportunity to sit the 2021 examinations at a later date.***

***Discussions of estimated marks are not permitted.***

*“Overtures or approaches by parents/guardians, students and others to, and/or discussions with teachers and/or school management in relation to school estimated marks submitted, as part of the Accredited Grades process **are prohibited.**”*

As other information becomes available to us we will continue to communicate this to students and parents.

Kind regards,

Paul Burke.

Principal