

FAQ for Leaving Certificate 2021

Q. What date will the CAO Round 1 offers be delivered?

On results day, which is expected to be Friday 3 September, in any subject where a candidate sits the examination and opts to receive Accredited Grades, they will be credited with the better of the two results.

The candidate's results will be transferred to the CAO to facilitate progression to higher education.

~~While that is a matter for the CAO, it is~~ The CAO will confirm this date shortly, which is expected to be on September 6th/7th.

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Q. How will the Leaving Certificate results issue date of 3 September impact on applications for entry to UCAS colleges (UK colleges) and colleges in other jurisdictions?

UCAS applicants will have until 7 September to accept any conditional offers they will have received from UK colleges, which will be after they have received their Leaving Certificate results on 3 September. They will therefore be within time to accept offers received.

Officials in the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science will engage with the representative bodies of UK universities in relation to this matter.

The Department has proactively engaged with higher education systems in other jurisdictions which are popular with Irish students, such as the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland and Hungary.

Q. Why was it not possible to deliver the results in August?

The timeframes for finalisation of results are particularly challenging this year given that the SEC has to manage both the examinations and Accredited Grades processes in parallel. Last year's written examinations were held in November and December.

It is important that both sets of results are finalised at the same time so that the 'better of' can be awarded to candidates on results day.

The date of 3 September also allows the SEC to complete a full range of quality assurance checks.

Q.

Have you learned from the experiences last year?

A number of key elements of the Calculated Grades model developed for Leaving Certificate 2020 are being incorporated in the model of SEC-Accredited Grades being developed for Leaving Certificate 2021.

These include the reliance on the professional judgement of teachers which shall not be subject to appeal; a process of in-school alignment to ensure fairness amongst candidates at school level; approval by the school principal of estimated subject scores; and a process of standardisation at national level to ensure as much fairness as possible amongst this year's candidates.

But we have learned lessons from last years' experience and incorporated many refinements to the model this year.

As I decided last year, the standardisation process will not use historical school by school data on past performance in Leaving Certificate Examinations.

Unlike last year, the Accredited Grades process will not use a class rank order of students.

The 2021 Accredited grades process includes a separate process to provide estimated marks for students studying subjects outside of school and out-of-school learners, involving the review of evidence concerning a candidate's learning by a Panel of Registered Teachers in each school. These were categories of students that we were unable to deal with fully last year.

A further process has been created to enable the provision of an estimated mark and Accredited Grade for candidates taking non-curricular languages, such as Slovakian, Swedish, Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Polish and Lithuanian.

A tendering process is currently being conducted to provide external quality assurance of the standardisation process.

Q Why has a review not been carried out?

It would have been inappropriate for me to conduct a formal review of the 2020 process while legal cases were ongoing and while the whole process of the November 2020 sitting of the Leaving Certificate examinations were ongoing.

Nonetheless, a “look back” exercise was conducted by the Department, with a

Q. Has there been any complaints made of canvassing this year?

The Department’s Accredited Grades helpdesk has handled some queries seeking further information regarding the guidance issued on canvassing but no complaints in this matter have been received.

Q. What plans have been put in place by the Dept to avoid outbreaks of Covid in exam centres?

The State Examinations Commission has worked closely with Public Health and schools have been provided with detailed guidance about running the examinations safely.

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.

Students have been advised that if they are a confirmed case, a close contact or they have symptoms they will not be able to sit their exams, and it is very important that students continue to limit their contacts over the coming weeks, so everyone has the best chance possible of sitting all the exams they have worked so hard for.

In relation to publishing the algorithm, or the technical details of the standardisation process, the process of standardisation is iterative in nature and will not be finalised until close to the publication of results. It is proposed that the technical details of the process will be published on results day. Other information regarding the standardisation process will be made available as that process develops.