

Dear Parents / Guardians,

The Minister for Education and Skills Joe McHugh TD has today (Thursday 19 March 2020) announced the cancellation of oral and practical performance tests of the state examinations which were originally scheduled to take place from Monday 23rd March to Friday 3rd April 2020. All students who were due to take these tests will be awarded full marks for this portion of the exam.

The decision was taken in light of the closure of schools as a result of the Covid-19 virus and it will be implemented by the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Minister McHugh said: "This is a difficult time for all. Students are facing a challenging period out of school and our decision on this element of the exams is being taken with their best interests at heart.

"It is the fairest response we could take in the circumstances. It guarantees that no student will score less than they would have if schools had been operating as normal.

"We have seen a new emphasis on remote learning amid the uncertainty about the impact of Covid-19 and the closure of all schools. I hope this decision will ease some of the pressure that students are feeling and allow them to focus more clearly on completing project work and preparing for written exams."

The change to the 2020 state examinations means all students who were due to take oral and practical performance tests in the following subjects will be given full marks for this part of the examination:

Oral tests in Leaving Certificate Irish and the Modern Languages of French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Japanese.

Practical performance tests in Leaving Certificate Music.

Practical performance tests in Junior Certificate Music and Home Economics.

Minister McHugh also confirmed changes to deadlines for students to complete project work and coursework in a number of subjects.

Students were originally scheduled to complete these elements of the state examinations on a number of dates from Friday 20 March to Friday 24 April 2020, depending on the subject.

Students will now be given until Friday 15 May 2020 to complete this work.

Minister McHugh said: "We know we are asking a lot of people in order to stem the spread of Covid-19. In response to that I want students and their parents or guardians and teachers to be given flexibility as they work towards the exams.

Minister McHugh also said the Department will continue to work with the State Examinations Commission to monitor the Covid-19 situation in terms of its potential impact on the other later scheduled components of the state examinations.

I am also aware that your own personal life has changed considerably over the last week and this brings its own demands on you. It is important that you stay well and work to a sustainable level as your family needs you also. We need to look out for each other and understand that we all need support so please reach out to each other as we are not used to working in isolation. This is not a time for judgement, cynicism or blame it is a time to be kind, supportive, and understanding.

"What gives us consolation in this human society filled as it is with errors and troubles, if not the sincere loyalty and mutual love of true and good friends?" St. Augustine

Kind regards and stay safe,

Michael O Sullivan

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