



Holy Family Secondary School

8th May 2020

Dear 6th years of HFSS

Update on Leaving Certificate 2020

The Minister for Education, Joe McHugh TD, has made an announcement today on RTE news that there will be no state examinations this summer for the Leaving Certificate.

Furthermore, it has been announced that from today, Senior Cycle for the current 6th year cohort nationally will now conclude. This is officially your last day of school in remote classes at HFSS. This is a bittersweet announcement for the staff of HFSS. We were very concerned about this ongoing ordeal for you all and we were hoping that you would all get definite clarity, yet, we were also hopeful that we might have the pleasure to share a few last school-time and class moments with you all. We might not have that, but we do have six jam-packed years of magnificent school memories.

We will celebrate with you and we will hold all of our annual 6th year traditions for you. In fact, we are more determined than ever to plan some wonderful future time occasions. This Leaving Certificate enigma has been a huge challenge for you all since March 12th. Yet, you have all endured this burden with marvellous grace, dignity, pragmatism and understanding. I assure you that when this window in your lives of Leaving Certificate concentration passes, the resilience and tolerance that you have shown in the last two months will stand to you all hugely in your futures. All of your teachers and school staff have been immensely impressed by the Class of 2020. You are a huge credit to your school, to your families and most importantly, you should be very proud of yourselves.

Should you feel the need to contact our school guidance counsellors, please let us know by emailing reception@holyfamily.ie. Do not feel alone in this, we are here for you.

The factual information about your Leaving Certificate;

While the provision of a postponed Leaving Certificate examination in July/August 2020 was initially proposed to start on 29th July, owing to the Covid-19 crisis, the Department of Education and the State Exams Commission have stated that it is not possible to operate the examinations safely, as they had planned. Existing and anticipated physical and practical requirements to protect the health of all citizens mean that the holding of the examinations is not feasible. Today, Friday 8th May 2020, the Minister has issued a statement that, in order to achieve the fairest possible outcomes in the current circumstances, the DES has announced a system of **Calculated Grades**.

A Calculated Grade is a grade that can be provided to students following the combination of school information about a student's expected performance in an examination and national data available in relation to the performance of students in examinations over a period of time.

The process of arriving at a Calculated Grade applies to the Leaving Certificate subjects and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme - Link Modules.

A calculated grade results from the combination of two data sets:

1. A school-based estimation of an overall percentage mark and ranking to be awarded to a student in a particular subject
2. Data available from the State Examinations Commission – this includes data on past performance of students in each school and nationally. The combination of these data sets through a process of national standardisation can determine the grade to be awarded to each student in each subject, thereby resulting in a Calculated Grade.

There are two main phases in the process of arriving at a Calculated Grade:

1. A school-based phase
2. A national standardisation phase

The role of the school

The role of the school is to provide marks and rankings that reflect:

- An estimation of the percentage mark in each subject that each candidate is likely to have achieved if they had sat the Leaving Certificate examination in 2020 under normal conditions
- A class ranking for each student in each subject – i.e. a list of all the candidates for a particular subject in a class in the order of their estimated level of achievement.

In providing the above estimated marks and rankings, there will be four main school-based steps:

1. The teacher's estimation of student marks and rankings
2. School alignment of marks for a subject through a subject alignment group comprising teachers who are teaching the subject to Leaving Certificate students this year
3. Oversight of the alignment process by the school principal
4. Transmission of the marks and rankings for national standardisation

Each of these steps is set out in detail in the booklet 'A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate Students 2020' available to download now and from the Government website (link below)

The earlier arrangement (communicated in March) that full marks would be awarded in respect of the orals and music performance tests was predicated on the written examinations proceeding this summer. As the examinations will not proceed, that arrangement will not apply.

Appeal Process?

In addition to the Calculated Grades process, provision has also been made for a three-stage Appeals Process involving:

1. A series of checks that data were correctly entered at school level and correctly transferred to the DES (Department of Education)
2. A review that the data were correctly received and processed by the DES
3. If a candidate remains dissatisfied after notification of outcome of the above two stages, verification of the DES processes by independent appeal scrutineers

Finally, and in the spirit of fairness to all Leaving Certificate students, the option of sitting the Leaving Certificate examinations when it becomes feasible to hold them remains open to all students.

<https://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2020-press-releases/PR20-05-08.html>

Other materials being published include

- A guidance document for the education system and others in relation to the system of Calculated Grades is available on the Department's website here: <https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Information/State-Examinations/a-guide-to-calculated-grades-for-leaving-certificate-students-2020.pdf>
- A [FAQs document](#) is also being published on gov.ie/Leaving Certificate for students, teachers and parents
- [Advice from the National Educational Psychological Service \(NEPS\) in relation to the wellbeing and mental health of Leaving Certificate students in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic](#)

We will, as always, keep you fully informed of the next steps as they are planned.

On behalf of all the staff at HFSS, wishing you all our most sincere and kind regards,



S. Allen, Principal

Related Files:

- [A Guide to Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate students 2020 \(.pdf - 515 KB\)](#)
- [Challenges of Organising Examinations with Social Distancing Requirements \(.pdf - 640 KB\)](#)
- [The Wellbeing and Mental Health of Young People in Ireland: Factors for Consideration for the Leaving Certificate Examination in the context of the Covid-19 Pandemic \(.pdf - 1161 KB\)](#)