

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Corr na Madadh,
Baile Átha Luain,
Co. na hIarmhí, N37 X659.



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

Department of Education and Skills
Cornamaddy,
Athlone,
Co. Westmeath, N37 X659.

September 2020

**To: Managerial authorities of Post-Primary schools
Principals of Post-Primary schools**

Re: Post-Primary Pupils (October) Return 2020/2021

1. General

I refer to the Post-Primary Pupils (October) Return for the 2020/2021 school year, which are due to be submitted by your school by **13th November 2020**

For 2020/21 your school's October Return for students in **Junior Cycle/JCSP, Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate programmes** must be submitted using the Post-Primary Online Database (PPOD). As in recent years, *there is a separate October Return for Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) students. Please see the separate enclosed note for **PLC students and October Returns** for further information.*

Your school's October Return files will be generated from your pupil data held on PPOD as soon as your school chooses the "Submit Returns to DES" option on PPOD. **All schools should familiarise themselves with Department circular 0038/2014 "Revised arrangements for the submission of returns to the Department of Education and Skills by post primary schools for 2014/15 and future years".**

Schools should produce their combined OL20/Certificate of Management directly from PPOD rather than from your local student administration system. This combined OL20/CMA has to be printed off and signed in the normal fashion and sent into the Department as soon as possible. Schools in the ETB sector are reminded that their OL20/CMA must be counter-signed by the Chief Executive of the ETB, who should then forward it to the Department as soon as possible thereafter.

Validation of pupil data prior to submission of returns

As you may be aware the pupil data submitted by your school is validated to ensure compliance with the *Rules and Programmes for Second Level Schools* and associated Departmental circulars so as to

establish if all pupils enrolled in your school as at **30th September** are *recognised pupils* for the purpose of inclusion in the total enrolment figure (combining both the non-PLC and PLC returns) which will be used for the allocation of staffing and funding to your school or ETB as appropriate. The practice to date has been for the Department to carry out this validation after receiving the returns. This often prolongs the returns process for schools until all errors are rectified. On occasion this process could tie up resources at school level.

The fixing of Errors/Warnings process has now been streamlined. The Department has incorporated a number of the validation rules for both pupil data and school data into the PPOD system so as to assist schools in submitting accurate pupil data in full compliance with the *Rules and Programmes*. The validation which is available within PPOD will highlight any errors in the pupil and school data. **Schools will have to rectify these errors BEFORE they can submit their October Return.**

However, there may still be a small number of incidences where the Department may have to issue follow-up validation error reports to your school. These reports will be issued via email to the email address of the named October Returns contact registered on PPOD under Update School Details > Miscellaneous > October Returns. ***It is imperative that these contact details of the member of staff responsible for October Returns-related issues are kept up-to-date.***

Guidance and resources available to school users

Schools are also reminded that the following PPOD User resources are available from the following link on the Department's website:

- PPOD User Guides
- PPOD information seminar presentation

<http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Returns/Post-Primary-Online-Database-P-POD-Project/>

2. Accuracy of data for exam entrant students

It is imperative that schools take particular care to ensure that the data, subjects and their levels, for the pupils who are entrants for the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations, including those repeating the Leaving Certificate, are accurate as at **30th September**. As you are aware the State Examinations Commission uses this data to plan for the upcoming practical, oral, aural and written State examinations. **In particular schools should check that only the actual subjects being taken by their exam candidates (both Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate) are recorded. Where subjects are not being taken by a student at either Junior Cycle or Leaving Certificate then these should be deleted for this student on P-POD.**

3. Regular Updating of contact details on PPOD

It is imperative that contact details and e-mail addresses etc. are kept up-to-date on PPOD for the following school staff:

- a. School Principal – Update School Details > Details tab
- b. Board of Management Chairperson – Update School Details > BoM chairperson tab
- c. October Returns Contact email – Update school Details > Miscellaneous tab

The Department will use these contact details to communicate with schools in relation to PPOD, October Returns and other issues that may arise when necessary.

For 2020/2021 and in line with the publication of the Department of Health and HSE School Pathway document for management of COVID-19 within the school community which sets out the principles that are underpinning the management of outbreaks or potential outbreaks and the aligned testing strategy within an educational facility, a mobile number for a designated contact, preferably the School Principal, should be entered in the "Mobile" field in the "Update School Details" page of PPOD. This will assist public health officials to contact schools where a suspected case of Covid-19 in the school arises.

THIS ALSO APPLIES IN THE CASE OF SCHOOLS WHO ONLY HAVE PLC STUDENTS.

4. Key Dates and Critical Deadlines

As you are aware, the October Returns will give school enrolments by programme as at 30th September 2020. The Department uses the information supplied for a number of tasks, which impact directly on individual schools and their pupils, including:

- payment of *per capita* grants to voluntary secondary schools, including secretarial and care-taking services;
- notification of entries for all state examinations in 2021;
- determination of the provisional teacher allocations for all sectors i.e. Secondary, Vocational, Community and Comprehensive; and
- provision of data to assist the Administrator in the performance of duties under the Redeployment Scheme.

Key Dates and Critical Deadlines for 2020/2021

30th September 2020	Annual Pupil Census date
13th November 2020	October Returns due date
27th November 2020	Information regarding examination entries is required by the State Examinations Commission, Athlone

December 2020	Teacher Allocations are scheduled to issue
January 2021	Payment of <i>per-capita</i> grants to secondary schools
February 2021	Determination of the annual non-pay budgets to community and comprehensive schools and ETBs.

5. State Examinations Commission

Schools are requested to note the deadline – **27th November** - associated with the generation of extracts of data for the State Examination Commission. This timely submission of data allows the Commission to commence the process of issuing E7s/E8s to candidates for state examinations, as well as establishing centres for the conduct of oral/practical examinations.

6. Closing Date for Receipt of Returns

The closing date for receipt of completed returns is **13th November 2020**. In the case of schools which submit returns after this date, it should be noted that teacher allocations and the payments referred to at point 4 above may not issue as scheduled.

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7. Personal Public Services Number (PPSN)

As you are aware, the PPSN remains the unique identifier for all pupils on the Post Primary Online Database (PPOD).

- Please ensure that the PPSNs for first years and other new entrants to your school have been entered on PPOD before submitting your October Return.
- **Pupils/Students can obtain their PPSN by contacting the Client Identity Services Section of the Department of Social Protection - telephone (1890) 927 999.**

8. Junior Cycle Short Courses

Schools which are offering short courses to their Junior Cycle pupils should refer to the document titled "***New Junior Cycle Short Courses User Guide***" which is published on the Department's website, www.education.ie, for instructions as to how they are to record short course data for their Junior Cycle pupils, if applicable.

9. Textbook Rental Scheme

Schools are required to either confirm that data on the Textbook Rental Scheme previously entered on P-POD is correct which is recorded via a checkbox or if the data is different, schools should change the data previously entered to reflect the correct position for 2020/2021 school year. Section 3 on Update School Details > Miscellaneous tab on P-POD refers.

10. Information Required in 2020/2021

- a. Section IV of the Certificate of Management Authority **requires schools offering boarding facilities** in the 2020/2021 school year to complete this section as it relates to Boarding Fees being levied on its boarding pupils.
- b. Section VII of the Certificate of Management Authority requires **all schools** to indicate where they have a **NIL** traveller return where no Irish Travellers have been recorded under the 'Ethnicity and Cultural Background' field for **first year pupils only** in the 2020/2021 school year.
- c. Vocational Schools and Community Colleges should submit their completed returns directly to the Department from P-POD and submit the relevant paperwork (combined CMA/OL20) to the Department **via their ETB head office**. Vocational Schools and Community Colleges must forward the CMA/OL20 to the relevant ETB for the Chief Executive's signature and ETB stamp. It will be the responsibility of the ETB to submit the completed paperwork to the Department immediately.
- d. **The Department has published various documentation, information notes and user guides on the project which are available on the Department's website at www.education.ie > Schools & Colleges > Services > School Returns > Post Primary Online Database (PPOD).**

11. Data Protection

Schools should ensure that the personal data of students enrolled in the school as at 30th September 2020 is processed fairly and in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 679/2016 and Data Protection Act 2018.

12. Freedom of Information

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), 2014, which became effective in October 2014 and repealed the 1997 and 2003 Acts, members of the public enjoy a legal right of access to information held by Government Departments subject to certain exemptions. In this context, information supplied in the Pupil

Returns belongs to a class of information which may be made available to the general public. Under the Act, the Department is obliged, *inter alia*, to safeguard the confidentiality of information concerning the private affairs of individual members of the public.

All information is held on the understanding of confidence, subject to the requirements of the FOI Act, 1997 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 679/2016 and Data Protection Act 2018.

13. Repeat Leaving Certificate Course Fees

Department Circular, CL95/2007 advises schools that students enrolled to repeat Leaving Certificate Year 2, who have previously sat the Leaving Certificate examinations, and whose parents or guardians are not the holders of current medical card are required to pay a course fee of €126.97 to the Department of Education and Skills as well as the relevant examination fee to the State Examinations Commission. Further information is contained in paragraph 6.1 of Department circular M02/95.

Contact Details for P-POD Helpdesk

The Department operates a P-POD Helpdesk which can be contacted via the following:

E-mail: ppodhelpdesk@education.gov.ie

Telephone: (090) 648 4279/4128/3906/4022/4286/3870/3990.

Your co-operation in this matter is greatly appreciated.

Tom Heneghan

Tom Heneghan HEO

Schools Financial & Database Section