

ADVISORY GROUP FOR CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR STATE EXAMINATIONS 2020
CLOCK TOWER, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS, MARLBOROUGH STREET

22 May 2020, 12.00 – 13.30

Agreed Meeting note

Present

	Name	Organisation/Position
Chair	Seán Ó Foghlú	Secretary General, DES
Students	Ciara Fanning	President, ISSU
	Alison Dervan	Student Voice Development Manager, ISSU
Parents	Aine Lynch	Chief Executive, NPC-P
	Mai Fanning	President, NPC-PP
Teachers	Deirdre MacDonald	President, ASTI
	Kieran Christie	General Secretary, ASTI
	Seamus Lahart	President, TUI
	John MacGabhann	General Secretary, TUI
School managers and leaders	John Curtis	General Secretary, JMB
	John Irwin	General Secretary, ACCS
	Nessa White	General Secretary, ETBI
	Clive Byrne	Chief Executive, NAPD
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment	John Hammond	Chief Executive, NCCA
Higher Education	Alan Wall	Chief Executive, HEA (Observer)
State Examinations Commission	Aidan Farrell	Chief Executive, SEC
Department of Education and Skills	Harold Hislop	Chief Inspector
	Dalton Tattan	Assistant Secretary General
	Yvonne Keating	Deputy Chief Inspector
	Anne Tansey	Director, NEPS
	Orlaith O'Connor	Assistant Chief Inspector
	Eamonn Moran	Principal Officer
	Ciara Molloy	Assistant Principal Officer
	Andrea Feeney	Director, Calculated Grades Executive Office
	Elaine Sheridan	Calculated Grades Executive Office
Observer	Mark O'Doherty	Adviser to Minister

Apologies

	Name	Organisation/Position
Department of Education and Skills	Deirdre Shanley	Assistant Secretary General
Observer	Philip O'Callaghan	Special advisor to Taoiseach

1. Welcome

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and acknowledged the significant progress that has been made since the last meeting in relation to the establishment of the calculated grades system.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

- Note of meeting of 6 May – revised note circulated and now approved
- Note of meeting 13 May – circulated for initial consideration, observations to be submitted

3. Calculated grades model

An update was provided by the Director of the Calculated Grades Executive Office (CGEO). The new CGEO is now established in the Department.

A detailed *Guide for Schools on Providing Estimated Percentage Marks and Class Rank Ordering* was published yesterday. The guide deals with students in a range of educational settings.

Procedures for external candidates who are not associated with any school setting are still being worked through. Noted that a relatively small proportion of candidates are expected to be in this position.

A date for the issuing to candidates of calculated grades has not been finalised but will be shared with the Advisory Group as soon as it is known.

4. Supporting materials/actions for calculated grades model

Instructional video for schools

Yvonne Keating gave a short introduction to an instructional video which has been prepared to support schools in arriving at an estimated percentage mark and class rank ordering. The video, which is based on the guide for schools published yesterday, will be 40 minutes long and will be made available shortly. A 10 minute excerpt of the video was played for the advisory group and feedback provided.

Guide for Students/Guide for Parents and Guardians

Orlaith O'Connor provided a brief overview of the Guide for Students and the Guide for Parents and Guardians. The information set out in the guides is already in the public domain, but is presented in more accessible manner and addresses key areas. The guides were shared with the Advisory Group members for their review and will be published in the coming days, taking on board feedback from the Advisory Group.

Portal for students

Andrea Feeney gave an over view of the portal for students:

- Calculated Grades Student Portal will be live from Tuesday 26th May for a short period of time only for registration and to capture candidate subject levels. The portal will reopen at a later date for the opt in piece
- On registration, students will be asked for their PPSN, their candidate number and their contact details
- In line with previous years, students will have the option to change the subject level downwards only
- There will be an intense publicity campaign around the launch of the Calculated Grades Student Portal encouraging all students to register on the portal and confirm their subject level
- A helpline will be available to support students with the Calculated Grades Student Portal
- The information gathered via the student portal will be fed back to schools so they can complete the in-school process
- Calculated Grades Aides will be made available to schools to support the process. The provision will be the same as that provided in other years via Examination aides
- Data collection on Esinet will be live week ending 5th June. A helpline will be available to schools.

The Chair invited comments from the stakeholders.

Comments on the portal:

- It would be useful to have advance information made available to members of the advisory group in order to alert teachers and principals to the fact that the portal is going live on Tuesday. This was agreed.
- It is important that students who do not have online access are catered for
- Students must be supported in making decisions regarding subject level as they would usually talk to their teachers in this matter
- Will schools be directed to ask their students to engage with this process?
- If a student submits wrong information on the portal, how will that be managed?
- Short timeline for access to the portal is the best approach
- Some provision is needed to allow a student to change the subject level upwards where there was an error in the level initially entered in January

Comments on the guides:

- In the guides, it is important that the relationship between the calculated grades and the examinations is clearly set out
- Guides should include a section clearly setting out the next steps for students and the actions they must take
- In the guide for students, the language about mock exams may need to be moderated so that they are not given unintended importance
- The reference to 'records of behaviour' should be amended to 'perception of behaviour'
- It should be clearly set out that calculated grades have the same currency as the Leaving Certificate examination, e.g. for the purpose of public service employment etc.
- Further information is required regarding the appeals process; external candidates; transition to third level; Leaving Certificate Applied

- Clarification regarding the role of substitute teachers should be included in the Guides, noting that there should be consultation between teachers
- Important to keep the guides accessible

Response to queries raised:

- Consideration is being given to students who may not have online access and also to students who may not engage in the process. The portal is mobile phone friendly, making it more accessible
- System will be supported by a helpline so students will be able to contact the Calculated Grades Executive Office for assistance
- Students without PPSN can contact a helpline, they will be asked some questions in order to validate who they are
- Information for students will include issues they might consider when thinking about changing their subject level
- The updated guide for students will include a section on immediate actions to be taken
- Schools will be asked to engage with their students in order to encourage them to complete the process. There will be a sweeping up period trying to capture all students
- Students will be presented with confirmation e-mail with subjects and levels and can contact helpline for any errors
- More detailed information on the appeals process and in relation to external candidates is available in the guide published on 8 May
- Every effort will be made to provide a calculated grade to all candidates, to the greatest possible degree, where there is satisfactory evidence available
- Support in relation to the calculated grades system is currently available through the calculatedgradessupport@education.gov.ie e-mail address which is being supported by the inspectorate
- Helplines will be available to support the two data collection processes, via the student portal and Esinet

5. Future timelines

The Chair invited Andrea Feeney to provide a brief overview of future timeline:

- Calculated Grade Student Portal will be open from 26 May for short period of time
- Esinet application for data entry by schools will open week ending 5 June
- It is anticipated that the bulk of work will be completed by teachers by the end of May
- Deadline for the submission of data by schools is to be confirmed
- There will be further discussion regarding the timeline for the issuing of results
- CAO have confirmed that their dates will be in line with issuing of results, and will be linked to issue of other jurisdictions.

Comments from stakeholders:

- Information regarding provision of Examination Aide system is now a matter of urgency.

6. Dates of future meetings, all at 11.30-13.30 unless otherwise agreed:

- Provisionally arranged for Friday, 5 June – may be by webex and date to be confirmed.