



# **Leaving Certificate 2020 Results of Calculated Grades**

## **Student Information Guide.**

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# **Information Note - Calculated Grades 2020** **RESULTS AND APPEALS SERVICES**

## **1. Introduction**

This document provides a brief guide to the calculated grades process and how it applies to the 2020 cohort of Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied students.

In making the difficult decision to postpone this year's Leaving Certificate Examination and replace it with the new system of Calculated Grades, the Department of Education and Skills has set out to develop the best possible system to provide students with fair and accurate results in the absence of them being able to sit the Leaving Certificate this summer.

This was important so that students would have the opportunity to move on with their lives and would be able to use these results to progress to employment, further education, training and apprenticeships and to higher education. It must be acknowledged that the system is not the same as a Leaving Certificate Examination and is not a perfect solution. However, it is the best alternative that could be provided. It is the fairest way possible to tackle the effects that lack of schooling and other problems caused by Covid-19 have had on the Leaving Certificate.

## **2. Key Dates**

The following grid outlines the key dates associated with the 2020 Calculated Grades results process.

7 September	Results of the Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied Calculated Grades will issue.
7 September	UCAS offers received by students
11 September	CAO first round offers
14 September	Students can access their estimated percentage mark and calculated mark through the student portal.
14 September	Appeals application process open to students through the student portal from 9.00 a.m.
16 September	Appeals application process closes at 5.00 p.m.
23 September	CAO round 2 offers
1 October	CAO round 3 offers
8 October	CAO round 4 offers

### 3. How to access my results.

The results of the Calculated Grades process will be available at 9.00 a.m. on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September. This is the earliest possible date that the results can be made available, given the rigorous and robust processes involved in producing Calculated Grades.

This will be in time for students who have applied through the CAO and the UK's UCAS for college entry for the 2020/2021 academic year, as both the CAO and UCAS have agreed to extend their timeline to accommodate this new process.

It will also allow students to progress to further education and training as close as possible as would have been the case had the Leaving Certificate examinations been run as normal.

To receive your Calculated Grades, you must once again login to the Calculated Grades Student Portal on [www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate](http://www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate). A "Before you Start Guide" is available on the Student Portal home page to guide you through accessing your results and printing a statement of those results.

**Leaving Certificate/Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme Students** – you will be able to view your results online, download and print a Statement of Provisional Results of Calculated Grades for Leaving Certificate 2020'. This is the only way to receive a hard copy of your results as a copy will not issue to schools.

**Leaving Certificate Applied Students** – you will be able to view your 'Statement of Provisional Results' which will show the credits you have achieved. The full 'Report of Credits and Statement of Provisional Results' will be issued to your school on 7<sup>th</sup> September and the school will contact you in relation to this. While you can view your results on the student portal, you will not have the facility to print a statement of provisional results.

By now you should be registered for Calculated Grades through the Student Portal developed by the Department of Education and Skills to support the Calculated Grades model. If you haven't yet registered to receive calculated grades and wish to do, please register on the student portal at [www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate](http://www.gov.ie/leavingcertificate).

Registration is easy and there are step by step instructions in the 'Before You Start Guide' to take you through this process. To complete the registration, you will need your Examination Number, your Personal Identification Number (PIN – this is the first 4 digits of your PPSN), your mobile phone number and email address which will be used to communicate with you about later stages of the Calculated Grades process.

If you have just now registered and wish to receive Calculated Grades please e-mail [lcsupport2020@education.gov.ie](mailto:lcsupport2020@education.gov.ie) with your details and confirm that you wish to receive Calculated Grades.

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU HAVE NOT REGISTERED TO RECEIVE CALCULATED GRADES, YOUR RESULTS HAVE NOT BEEN FORWARDED TO THE CAO.**

#### **4. Will Calculated Grades have the same Status as the Leaving Certificate Examination?**

The Leaving Certificate results from any one year are considered equivalent to the results from any other year. This is because the results each year are subject to a process of national standardisation through the marking processes undertaken by the State Examinations Commission. This year, the focus of the national standardisation process has been on bringing schools into line with each other across a national standard.

By collecting and using a range of different types of information, the different sources of data complement each other, to provide the most accurate and fair set of results within the limitations of the available data. As the school data is only accurate at school level, the final calculated marks, and so Calculated Grades, provided to students, for any subject and level, may be higher or lower than the estimates provided by their school. While the school-based estimates may move upwards or downwards, the class rank order, provided by the school, will not be changed.

The results of Calculated Grades have an equal standing and status to previous and future Leaving Certificate grades

#### **5. How to view estimated percentage marks provided by the school**

The Calculated Grades Student Portal will reopen on 14 September at 9.00 am and will allow students to request access to their personal data including the percentage marks they were awarded by the Calculated Grades process which they will see immediately.

Students will also on 14 September be able to access the estimated percentage marks provided by their schools. Students may wish to have access to and consider this data if they are considering an appeal of their Calculated Grade.

#### **6. What if I am unhappy with my Calculated Grade?**

Students dissatisfied with the grade achieved will have access to an appeals process. The appeals process will be an administrative process and students may not appeal against the information provided on their behalf by the school as these have already been subjected to an in-school alignment process and oversight by the school principal.

Students may lodge an appeal through the student portal between 9.00 am on Monday 14 September and 5.00 pm on Wednesday 16th September. There is no fee to appeal a calculated grade.

Stage1: Checks will be undertaken to ensure that the intended information was recorded correctly by the school on the relevant forms and that the information was transferred correctly from the forms to data collection system.

Stage 2: There will be a review to ensure that the data was correctly received and processed through the national standardisation process conducted by the Department.

Data checks will include a check to ensure that the rank order of the class group for the subject and level taken has been preserved in the standardisation process and that students placed on the same school-estimated mark in the same subject and at the same level taken by the school are conferred with the same calculated mark conferred by the Department.

Students dissatisfied with the outcome of the appeals process can seek further review by Independent Appeal Scrutineers.

Stages 1 and 2 will be undertaken on foot of the initial application by the student.  
Stage 3 will be a separate process which can be invoked by any student dissatisfied by the outcome of the initial appeal.

Students who remain unhappy with the appeals process also have recourse to the Office of the Ombudsman, or in the case of students under 18 years of age, to the Ombudsman for Children.

**Students who consider that their case has not been processed correctly can make a complaint to the Ombudsman or, in the case of students under 18 years of age, the Ombudsman for Children.**

Students who remain unhappy with the outcome of the calculated grade process will also have the opportunity to sit the 2020 written Leaving Certificate examinations which will commence on 16 November subject to public health advice. Further details regarding these examinations will be provided by the State Examinations Commission at a later stage. Students sitting the written examinations who opted to receive Calculated Grades will be credited with the higher subject grade achieved between the Calculated Grade and the written examination.

## **7. How will I receive the results of my Appeal?**

The outcome of the initial appeals process will be made available through the student portal. The date for issue of appeals decisions will be notified to the relevant students in due course.

## **8. Why some students may not receive Calculated Grades in a subject or subjects**

The system of Calculated Grades was created to allow as many as possible of the 61,000 students in the Leaving Certificate class of 2020 to progress to employment, further education and training, or higher education in a way that is fair and equitable to all students.

The system is underpinned by key principles of objectivity, equity and fairness. For the Calculated Grades system to be operated with integrity, and to ensure fairness to all students, an estimated percentage mark, based on credible, satisfactory evidence, can only be accepted from an appropriate source.

There are two particular groups of students who may not have been able to receive Calculated Grades and they will already have been advised of this during August 2020:

- students who were enrolled in full-time education but were studying an extra subject(s) outside the school
- external students who were not enrolled in full-time education and are regarded as out-of-school learners.

In cases where a student was attending school, but was studying one or more subjects outside of school, school principals were asked to make every effort to provide an estimated percentage mark for that subject(s) provided there was sufficient, credible evidence available from an appropriate source.

Out of school learners had to apply directly to the CGEO for Calculated Grades.

Where it was not deemed possible to provide a Calculated Grade in a subject(s), to either an out of school learner or a student studying a subject outside of school, the student will have been contacted by the CGEO to inform them of this decision.

Despite every effort being made by schools and by the Department of Education and Skills to provide Calculated Grades to as many students as possible, there was a small number of cases where there was no credible evidence from an appropriate source to support a Calculated Grade in a particular subject.

Where it is not possible to provide a Calculated Grade, students will have the opportunity to sit the 2020 Leaving Certificate examinations in one or more subjects. The 2020 postponed Leaving Certificate examinations will commence on Monday 16 November, subject to public health advice.

## **9. Studying outside school to fulfil minimum entry requirement or matriculation requirements**

In some cases, students will have studied a subject or subjects outside of school with a view to satisfying matriculation or minimum entry requirements for higher education institutions. The higher education sector has been flexible in its approach to matriculation/minimum entry requirements for Leaving Certificate students in 2020.

The representative bodies of all of the universities and institutes of technology (the higher education institutions) agreed a common approach in relation to students who have studied Leaving Certificate 2020 subjects outside school and who have not been able to receive a Calculated Grade in those subjects.

In 2020, students who applied for a Calculated Grade in a subject or subjects in the Leaving Certificate 2020, with a view to satisfying matriculation/minimum entry requirements and for whom the Calculated Grades Executive Office was unable to award a Calculated Grade in a subject(s), will be granted an exemption in the subject(s) solely for matriculation/minimum entry purposes.

These exemptions will be granted automatically and it will not be necessary for students to apply individually.

The subject(s) will count as subject(s) for matriculation but will not attract points.

The exemptions(s) cannot be used to satisfy additional programme requirements over and above the matriculation/minimum entry requirements.

Further information is available from the admissions offices of the individual higher education institutions.

## **10. Sitting the later Leaving Certificate examinations?**

Even if you opted to receive Calculated Grades you will still have an opportunity to sit the later Leaving Certificate examinations in one or more subjects. The Leaving Certificate examinations will commence on 16<sup>th</sup> November subject to public health advice at the time. The examinations will take place at evenings and weekends. Further details regarding these examinations will be provided by the State Examinations Commission at a later stage. It will not be possible for schools to provide tuition to anyone sitting these examinations in November as schools will have returned to teaching and will be fully occupied in providing education to their current students.

## **11. Details of the written examinations**

The postponed Leaving Certificate examinations will be based on written examinations only (i.e. not including orals or practicals but including coursework in 5 subjects which was completed prior to school closure in March). It is not feasible or practical at this stage to conduct examinations in oral or practical components, or to try to complete unfinished coursework. Oral and practical components are school-based, requiring significant levels of support at school level, including the requirement to take serving teachers out of their schools to undertake state examinations work.

In the case of five subjects, the SEC will also mark coursework which had been completed prior to school closure and these marks will be included in the grading of these subjects. These are:

- Home Economics (already marked by the SEC);
- LCVP Portfolio;
- Design and Communication Graphics;
- Physical Education (PE) Physical Activity Project;
- Engineering.

In all other subjects, candidates will be awarded grades solely on the written papers.

If you do choose to sit one or more subjects in the rescheduled Leaving Certificate examinations, your final Leaving Certificate will reflect the better result you achieved. For example:

- if you sit the later examinations and you receive a grade lower than the Calculated Grade that you received in the subject, your certificate will display the Calculated Grade, as this is higher.
- if you receive a higher grade in the later examination, then this is the grade that will appear on your certificate.

However, it is important to note that grades from the later examinations will not be available in time for CAO and UCAS process in the 2020/2021 academic year.

## **12. How to apply to sit the November Examinations**

Students were offered the option of receiving Calculated Grades and/or sitting Leaving Certificate written examinations at a later date when it was considered safe to do so.

Even if you opted to receive Calculated Grades you still have an opportunity to sit the later Leaving Certificate examinations in one or more subjects.

Details of how to apply to sit the written examinations will shortly be provided by the State Examinations Commission.

### **13. Combining Calculated Grades results with the results of the written examinations**

If you decide to sit the postponed Leaving Certificate examination, your final Leaving Certificate will reflect the best results for you.

For example:

- if you sit the later examinations and you receive a grade lower than the Calculated Grade that you received in the subject, your certificate will display the Calculated Grade, as this is higher
- if you receive a higher grade in the later examination, then this is the grade that will appear on your certificate

However, it should be noted that results from the later examinations will not be available in time to take up a higher education place in the 2020/2021 academic year.

### **14. Dates for the results of the written examinations**

Results from the November examinations are not expected before early February 2021 at the earliest. The results will not be available in time to commence first year in 2020/21.

### **15. Support and Guidance available to Students when they receive their results.**

It is recognised that for the Leaving Certificate class of 2020 the tradition of coming back to school to celebrate the results with teachers and classmates on the day that the results issue will not be the same as in previous years.

In recognising the unique set of circumstances for those students who receive calculated grades in 2020, schools will be able to put a number of measures in place to support students on the day and in the following number of days. These measures recognise the role that schools played in nurturing and supporting students throughout their years in post-primary.

Schools have been advised to provide support to students in an appropriate way on the day, through enabling students to come to the school if they wish at a scheduled time, following COVID-19 and health and safety protocols, to meet with members of the Student Support Team such as Guidance Counsellors, Year Heads, Tutors and Chaplains.

The wellbeing of the students who receive the calculated grades will be supported through a number of additional measures.

- a. The Leaving Certificate student helpline, at 1800 265 165, which is provided by the National Parents Council post-primary (NPC-PP) will be available from 11.00 am on 7 September for students to reach a guidance counsellor with any queries that they may

have. This helpline will operate until Wednesday 16 September, after the CAO first round offers, and is staffed by qualified guidance counsellors.

- b.** HSE/HSE-funded service providers will be available to support students through the provision of e-mental health services. <https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/covid-19/minding-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak.html>
- c.** Wellbeing resources developed by the National Educational Psychological Service are available at [www.gov.ie/leavingcert](http://www.gov.ie/leavingcert)
- d.** The CGEO helpline will be available at 1800 111135 or 1800 111136 from 9.00 am to 4 pm from Monday 7 September to Wednesday 16 September. Outside of these hours queries may be e-mailed to [lcsupport2020@education.gov.ie](mailto:lcsupport2020@education.gov.ie). Please note this helpline is provided for queries relating to the Calculated Grades results only and cannot provide advice on any other matters.
- e.** Information available from the Central Applications Office (CAO) at [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

## **16. How the calculated Grades Process works.**

There are two phases in the process of arriving at a calculated grade:

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

### **School based phase.**

There were 4 elements to the school-based phase:

1. Teachers using their professional judgement to provide an estimated percentage mark and class rank order for each student in each subject.
2. School alignment of marks for each subject through a subject alignment group comprising teachers who are teaching the subject to Leaving Certificate students.
3. Oversight of the alignment process by school principal.
4. Transmission of the estimated percentage marks and class rank order for national standardisation.

Checks and balances in the process ensured that the data was entered correctly and accurately. A similar robust and rigorous quality assurance process has been carried out by the CGEO on receipt of the school data and in subsequent processing. Further checking took place, which will include sampling some of the completed paperwork from randomly selected schools to ensure accuracy.

Every effort has been made to provide a Calculated Grade to as many students as possible, whether they are out-of-school learners or taking one or more subjects outside of school.

For the Calculated Grades system to be operated with integrity, and to be fair to all students, an estimated percentage mark, based on credible, satisfactory evidence, can only be accepted from an appropriate source.

## **17. What is National Standardisation?**

National standardisation is the process by which the estimate of student expected level of examination performance are brought into line with each other on a subject and level basis. The statistical approach adopted has at its core fairness for students.

The standardisation method is an iterative statistical process, which by its very nature, is evolving with each iteration. The technical detail of the standardisation methodology will be published after the completion of the process.

Research makes clear that because teacher judgments are made in the context of each school, they need to be examined and adjusted at a national level to ensure comparability across different schools and that a common national standard is applied.

Schools will have taken different approaches to providing estimated percentage marks for their students. While clear guidance was provided to schools in avoiding bias during the process of estimating marks for their students, it is inevitable that some schools will have been overly harsh in their estimations while others will have been overly generous. This is to be expected given that there is no national standard on which to base an estimated mark.

The standardisation process brings schools into line with each other across a national standard. This results in some estimated marks being reduced while others will be increased. This process will also ensure that the results issued in 2020 will have the same status as those issued in previous or future years.

## **18. Why schools' estimated percentage marks cannot be used alone**

The approach taken to calculate grades centres on international, educational research which tells us that teachers are more likely to make accurate judgments of student performance in a high stakes context and that teachers are good at ranking their students relative to each other. Therefore, schools were asked to provide an estimated mark and a rank order for each student in a class group.

The Leaving Certificate results from any one year are considered equivalent to the results from any other year. This is because the results each year are subject to a process of national standardisation through the marking processes undertaken by the State Examinations Commission. This year, the national standardisation process combines the school-sourced data and the historical data to ensure the Calculated Grades reflect standards that are properly aligned across schools and with a national standard.

By collecting and using a range of different types of information, the different sources of data complement each other, to provide the most accurate and fair set of results within the limitations of the available data. As the school data is only accurate at school level, the final calculated marks, and so Calculated Grades, provided to students, for any subject and level, may be higher or lower than the estimates provided by their school. While the school-based estimates may move upwards or downwards, the class rank order, provided by the school, will not be changed.

It is as a result of this standardisation process that the Calculated Grades will have an equal standing and status with previous and future Leaving Certificate grades. If this were not done, it would undermine the currency and value of Calculated Grades.

## **19. Publication of information on the details of the standardisation process**

The standardisation process will have been completed shortly in advance of the release of the Calculated Grades results, with the focus then shifting to the final validation process and to conducting the many rigorous and robust quality assurance checks required to ensure that the process has executed in a fair and equitable manner to all students.

## **20. Changes made to the Standardisation Process**

The main reason for applying a standardisation process to the system of Calculated Grades is to ensure equity and fairness across all students. This principle of equity and fairness underpinned the original Government Decision of 8 May 2020 to introduce a system of Calculated Grades and has been the guiding principle in all of the work undertaken by the Calculated Grades Executive Office.

When teachers in different schools provide school estimated marks for candidates, they are able to rank students relative to each other with a high degree of accuracy; however, they are less aware of the standards of achievement in other schools and nationally. Not unexpectedly, different schools took different approaches to estimating marks and rank orders. Hence, this can result in the provision of estimates that are either too generous or too harsh. Standardisation is necessary to ensure that the candidates receiving calculated grades in 2020 are treated fairly and equitably relative to each other.

It is important to understand that from the outset, estimated marks received from schools were expected to change as a result of the standardisation process. Irish teachers and schools engaged diligently in providing estimated marks and rankings in 786 schools and centres, but they had never done such work in the past. Although teachers in each school or centre were knowledgeable about standards of learning among their own students, they could not be fully aware of standards in other schools across the country. This meant that it would not have been possible for them to make absolutely accurate judgements in terms of the national standard for leaving certificate grades for all subjects at higher, ordinary and foundation level.

In addition, it is desirable to ensure that candidates within the 2020 cohort who are sitting the alternative written examinations in November and those who sat the examinations in 2019 or who will sit the examinations in 2021 and other years, are also equitably treated. By reducing excessively generous marking among those receiving calculated grades, and by increasing the marks of those that have been marked too harshly in teachers' estimates, standardisation helps to ensure a degree of comparability between students receiving calculated grades and those sitting examinations.

The standardisation process put in place after the Government decision of 8 May was intended to use a number of sets of data to ensure equitable treatment of candidates in each subject and at each level. These data sets included:

1. The estimated percentage marks and class ranking of students supplied by schools to the Calculated Grades Executive Office.
2. Junior Cycle Examinations performance of the class of 2020 in each school, to be used at a group level rather than an individual level.

3. The historical school distribution – based on historical Leaving Certificate Examination performance at the school level across 2017, 2018 and 2019.
4. National Leaving Certificate results data for 2017, 2018 and 2019 with student-level linkages to the corresponding Junior Certificate results data of those student cohorts.
5. National distribution of student results for 2017, 2018 and 2019 on a subject-by-subject basis.

The Government on 1 September approved the finalised process for the production of Calculated Grades. The process, through the examination and adjustment of estimated percentage marks from schools, will still fulfil its key role of ensuring that the calculated grades iron out the unfairness that could arise when different schools applied various standards when judging the performance of students. However, the Government agreed to a number of adjustments proposed by the Minister. The Minister was conscious that the use of school-by-school historical data on the performance of students in previous years' cohorts (data set 3 above) had been criticised in public commentary about calculated grades and that it had led in other jurisdictions to accusations that students attending disadvantaged schools in those jurisdictions were at risk of being treated unfairly or subjected to "a post-code lottery". There had also been criticism about the judgements of schools being adjusted to rigidly maintain year-to-year comparability in the national standards of the examinations.

In view of the above the Minister proposed that the finalised standardisation model should not include the school-by-school historical data on the Leaving Certificate performance of students in the school in previous years. She also proposed placing a reduced reliance on the historical national distribution of student results on a subject-by-subject basis (data set 5 above). These adjustments to the model were agreed by Government.

As a result of the changes, even greater emphasis has been placed on the estimated percentage marks provided by schools, while there is still a limited element of historical national distribution data in the standardisation model, along with the combined Junior Certificate exams performance of the Leaving Certificate class of 2020 in each school.

## **21. How this change will impact on the process**

The standardisation process has been finalised and students will receive their individual Calculated Grades on 7 September. The outcomes from the model will reflect the objective of ensuring that the school estimates are given priority. Schools' estimated percentage marks are at the core of the model and have been from the beginning.

On an overall basis what has emerged from the application of the finalised standardisation model is that the results will be stronger than in previous years, with different effects being seen across various subjects and levels. However, the Government considers that this is acceptable given the exceptional nature of the year that Leaving Certificate students have experienced.

The finalised model is not showing any differential effects against disadvantaged schools. In fact, the attainment gap has narrowed compared to previous years.

The process will also deliver on the commitment made that stronger performing students in traditionally lower-performing schools can attain beyond the normal range of grades provided their performance has been reflected in the interval level information between students in the rank order provided by the schools as set out in the *Guide for Schools*.