



## Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit

State Examinations Commission

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S18/26

### Leaving Certificate (Established) Examinations 2026; Oral Examinations in Irish and the Modern Foreign Languages

#### **TO THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT/AUTHORITIES OF SECOND-LEVEL SCHOOLS AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES OF ETBS AND MANAGEMENT OF OTHER CENTRES OF EDUCATION PROVIDING LEAVING CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS IN 2026**

For the 2026 Leaving Certificate (Established), Oral examinations will be held in Irish, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese.

Circular **S86/25**, which is available [HERE](#) announced that the Leaving Certificate Oral examinations for the 2026 Leaving Certificate will be held in the early part of the Easter holiday period from **Saturday 28 March to Thursday 02 April 2026 inclusive**.

The purpose of this circular (S18/26) is to provide school authorities with further details of the arrangements for the conduct of the Leaving Certificate Oral examinations and to provide instructions as to what schools are required to do now. You are asked to note the contents of this circular and to bring it to the attention of relevant personnel in your school.

For 2026, six Pastoral Support Examinations Aide days are available to schools. **Details of the Pastoral support arrangements for the 2026 Leaving Certificate** are provided in Section 2.b) below.

The SEC is extremely grateful for the cooperation it receives from thousands of teachers each year to undertake the critical work of examining. School leaders are of course aware of the challenges in recent years in the recruitment and retention of teachers as Oral examiners and of the impact on the system when there are not enough examiners. Our objective has been to substantially increase the numbers of teachers involved in examinations work so that the experience is a positive one which greatly enhances teacher professional competence as well as earning power. In light of our collective efforts, as part of a contract staff supply review process, we have seen a great improvement in the number of teachers coming forward for roles as Oral examiners in recent years associated with the change in timing and increased remuneration attached to this.

Nonetheless, with candidate numbers increasing more examiners are required this year. We would like to thank school leaders for actively supporting our recruitment efforts this year by promoting the value of examining roles for the State Examinations to your staff. Benefits include developing the quality of their

teaching as well as their assessment competence. We expect that releasing examiners for a one-day training conferences will not be any impediment to the participation of teachers as examiners.

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE CONDUCT OF THE ORAL EXAMINATIONS

This section contains important information for you on the operation of the examinations;

- The examinations will be conducted by visiting examiners, recruited, trained and appointed to schools by the SEC.
- Examiners will be assigned a school or a list of schools in which they will deliver the Oral examinations over the designated examination period.
- From Monday 2 March, designated examiners will contact the schools to which they are assigned to advise them of the days they intend to visit the school to deliver the examinations, and the number of candidates they will examine each day.
- Most examiners have been assigned a full 5-day itinerary (in the period from Saturday 28 March to Thursday 02 April inclusive) to cover all of the schools to which they have been assigned. This greatly limits their flexibility. Your co-operation in relation to accommodating examiners on the particular days they intend to visit the school is appreciated. Once confirmed the itinerary cannot be changed.
- Examiners have been instructed not to examine more than a set number of candidates on each day. The examinations will be delivered in the normal hours of a full school day, in as far as is possible.
- Given that all of the examinations are being delivered in the same assessment window, it is highly likely that it will be necessary to accommodate a number of examiners on the same day in your school.
- Schools are asked to be cognisant of the impact of the scheduling on candidates, in particular those entered for Oral examinations in multiple languages. Please see Section 4 below.
- There should be a designated **Administration Examinations Aide** assigned to deal with the Oral examinations to act as the coordinator and central point of contact for these examinations. (See Section 2(a) below re supports for schools.)
- Separate to the Administration Examination Aide there should also be a designated **Pastoral Support Examinations Aide** to support candidates during the oral examinations at Easter. (See Section 2(b) below re supports for schools.)
- Examiners should be provided with an out-of-hours mobile phone contact number for the Administration Examinations Aide for the Oral examinations in case they need to get in touch for any emergency issues arising over the duration of the examinations. Examiners have been instructed to provide their contact details to the school.

### **Use of Contingency Days**

Decisions on the use of contingency days will be made by the SEC and will be approved only in exceptional circumstances.

- Holding examinations on these days will require the examiner to be released from their own school to deliver the examinations on these contingency days; therefore, use of these days will be considered only in the most exceptional circumstances.
- Examiners do not have discretion to arrange the examinations on these days.

- Examinations will only be arranged on these days in exceptional circumstances where the issue is beyond the control of the candidate and the school.
- Decisions on the use of these contingency days will be made by the SEC where exceptional and extraordinary circumstances have occurred, necessitating the scheduling of examinations on a contingency day(s).
- The SEC will need to be satisfied that it is not practicable to hold the examinations without availing of a contingency day(s).

## **2. SUPPORTING SCHOOLS**

Delivering the Oral examinations in the Easter holidays attracts additional resources under the SEC's Examination Aide days scheme. See below for details noting that the Administration Examinations Aide for the Orals and the Pastoral Support Examination Aide cannot be the same person. Principals are not required to be in attendance in school on these days in the Easter holidays and are empowered to assign members of teaching staff to discharge both Examination Aide roles in respect of these examinations. Discretion as to who to appoint rests with the school principal.

### **a) Examinations Aide – Administration**

The SEC provides financial support for schools in the administration of the annual Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations. Under the scheme, school authorities have discretion to engage an Examinations Aide for a period of 15 days each year to assist the Principal during the state examinations or to fully substitute for the Principal if they are unavailable for any reason. Additional days are also available to schools based on the number of examination candidates and the duration of the timetable in that school. The Examinations Aide days are to be used for both the written examinations and the related assessment components.

In addition, in recognition of the workload associated with the Easter model of delivery, **8 Examinations Aide days** are available to schools with **120 Leaving Certificate candidates** or fewer while **10 days** are available to those schools with **in excess of 120 Leaving Certificate candidates**. The provision of these days is intended to act as a support to school leaders in the administration of these tests and their delivery over the Easter holidays.

### **b) Examinations Aide– Pastoral Support**

For the 2026 examinations an additional 6 Examinations Aide - Pastoral Support days are also provided. The number of days that schools can claim will be dependent on the number of days on which there are oral examinations in each school. The resource is provided so that each school authority can appoint a member of staff for the specific purpose of providing pastoral support to candidates and to ensure their attendance at the time of the delivery of the Oral examinations over the Easter holiday period.

It appears that not all schools deployed the Pastoral Support Examinations Aide resource in previous years and in certain schools which did there was confusion about the role and some overlap with the role of the Administrative Examinations Aide. We are taking this opportunity to enhance and clarify these arrangements for the 2026 Leaving Certificate.

Given the critical importance of this pastoral role in supporting candidates during the Oral examinations we are providing further information on the duties of the Pastoral Support Examinations Aide. The person undertaking the pastoral support role will be deputising for the principal. The person appointed has the following duties;

- Attend the school and be available to candidates in the school throughout the Oral examinations
- Make themselves known to the candidates in school prior to the commencement of the examinations so that the candidates can contact them as necessary and provide the candidates with a phone number they can use to contact them during the week of the orals.
- Be a visible presence and provide support to all candidates as required before and after their examinations
- Monitor and manage the attendance of candidates according to the attendance schedule
- Follow up with any candidate who does not attend on time for their Oral examinations or at all
- Ensure that all candidates have a way of getting to school on each day of their examinations (and noting, as at d) below, that the SEC will recoup to schools the cost of taxi fares for any candidates who are reliant on the Department's School Transport Scheme who need transport)
- Provide other support to candidates as the need arises.
- It is a requirement that the person appointed to this role is not involved in the operational and administrative duties associated with the Oral examinations and is therefore a different individual to the person undertaking the Examinations Aide - Administration role.

**c) Sundry Costs**

Reasonable additional costs specifically incurred in relation to light, heat, cleaning, caretaking within schools, associated with the Oral examinations taking place in the Easter holidays will be reimbursed by the SEC.

**d) Transportation**

To facilitate attendance by candidates reliant on the school transport scheme, schools can arrange taxi services for the Oral examinations during the Easter Holidays where necessary and recover the costs from SEC. Schools are asked to facilitate the attendance of candidates using taxi services in the following limited circumstances. The candidate must:

- be eligible for school transport under the terms of the Department's School Transport Scheme and
- be availing of school transport in the current school year for whom transport services will not be available over the Easter holiday period
- have to attend for an examination event over this period.

The SEC will reimburse schools for reasonable costs of such services on the production of valid receipts.

Full details of the supports available to schools this year to support the running of all aspects of the examinations including details of how to claim will be contained in SEC Circular S17/2026 which will issue later in February 2026.

**3. ORDER OF MERIT LIST FOR THE ORAL EXAMINATIONS**

In line with the SEC's longstanding practice in the Oral examinations, an Order of Merit list is required to be prepared showing the school's estimate of the oral proficiency of each candidate. This will be required only in the exceptional circumstances where a recording of a candidate's Oral examination cannot be accessed. To facilitate the preparation of an Order of Merit list, copies of form ML10/BT10 are available [here](#). School authorities should ensure that the forms ML10/BT10 are completed at the time of the Oral examinations and retained in the schools. Where this form is required by the SEC we will contact you to

ask for it to be submitted. **The forms should not be routinely sent to the SEC nor should they be given to the examiners.**

Please use a separate form for each language.

Please place the names of the pupils in each Leaving Certificate class on the enclosed forms in order of merit according to the school's estimate of proficiency. When completing the ML10/BT10 forms please use the following symbols:

A.L. = Higher Level	G.L. = Ordinary Level
B.L. = Foundation Level	M = Mixed class

All that is required is an Order of Merit; do not award any marks.

#### 4. **SCHEDULING OF CANDIDATES**

On arrival at the school on the first day of their assignment, examiners should be given a list showing the order in which candidates will present for the examinations. Examiners will have informed the school in advance of the number of candidates that they will examine each day. Any timetable made out by the school, therefore, can only be approximate. While every effort will be made to hold the examinations as close to the designated time as possible, it is really important that candidates be made aware that they will not necessarily be examined at that specific time.

Consideration should be given to candidates who are due to take more than one examination over the 6-day period and school authorities should make every reasonable effort to avoid a candidate having to take two Oral examinations on a single day. In limited circumstances this may be unavoidable, particularly if a candidate is taking a number of language subjects, or is taking the less popular subjects in which there are fewer examiners. Generally, every precaution should be taken by the Administration Examinations Aide to ensure that no candidate is taking two examinations on one day. School authorities can contact the SEC by email to [orals@examinations.ie](mailto:orals@examinations.ie) or by telephone to 090 6442741 or 090 6442700 if they encounter scheduling clashes and require advice.

#### 5. **RECORDING OF THE ORAL EXAMINATIONS**

Digital Voice Recorders (DVRs) will be used to record the Oral examinations in all languages. Examiners will be provided with the equipment that they need to record each examination for later use such as monitoring, for quality assurance purposes and appeals. Schools and candidates are prohibited from making their own recordings (See also note 10 below).

#### 6. **ATTENDANCE AT THE ORAL EXAMINATIONS**

On their arrival at the school on the first day of their assignment the examiner should be asked to provide identification. Any advising examiners from the SEC who visit the school should also be asked for identification.

SEC advising examiners may visit the school over the course of the assignment to advise and support the work of the examiner. This will require their attendance in the room during the examinations.

The Manager/Principal (or his/her appointed representative) may, in exceptional circumstances be present during the examinations, this must be approved in advance by the SEC. In such circumstances, the Manager/Principal (or his/her appointed representative) shall not interfere with, participate in, or otherwise influence the conduct of the oral examination.

It is also expected that the Examination Aide will maintain a presence in the vicinity, as appropriate, during these examinations.

## **7. ILLNESS, BEREAVEMENT TRANSFERS AND EXTERNAL CANDIDATES**

### **7.1 Absence of a Candidate through illness/bereavement**

It is intended to hold late examinations from Monday 18 May to Friday 22 May 2026, for situations where a candidate is absent through illness or bereavement.

An application for such arrangements must be made by the school authorities at the time of the absence during the period **Saturday 28 March to Thursday 02 April** using the Late Application form which is available on our website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie) under the Examination Information section. **The SEC should be notified of absences using the form as close as possible to the date of the absence. Recognising the impact of holding examinations over the Easter holidays, all Late Applications with accompanying medical evidence or evidence of bereavement must reach the SEC on or before Friday 17 April 2026.**

Medical certificates or similar documents should not be given to the examiner.

It is not possible to make alternative arrangements for any candidate other than as mentioned above. Medical certification or evidence of bereavement is required in all circumstances.

### **7.2 Transfer of Candidates**

The Orals Section of the SEC should be notified immediately of any candidate transferring from, or to, your school and the name and candidate number and details of the other school should be given.

### **7.3 External Candidates**

All candidates who do not attend your school but plan to attend for the purpose of the examinations are required by the SEC to have received prior permission. On the understanding that such permission is received, the SEC will make appropriate arrangements with the candidates concerned.

## **8. MULTIPLE SUBJECT EXAMINERS IN THE SAME SCHOOL**

Where two (or more) examiners for the same language have been appointed to one school, candidates must present for examination to the examiner to whom they have been assigned, and no amendments or alterations to these assignments can be made by the school.

## **9. INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES**

### **9.1 General Information**

We are drawing your attention to the fact that general Information about the 2026 Oral examinations is available [HERE](#) on the SEC website [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie).

### **9.2 Leaving Certificate Irish – Common only**

Teachers of the subject are already aware that candidates taking the Irish Common Oral Examination are required to prepare 10 Sraith Pictiúr instead of the traditional 20. Appendix 1 of this document contains a description of how candidates need to prepare for the selection of the Sraith Pictiúr in advance of their examination and what they need to provide to the Examiner on the day. School authorities should arrange to provide a copy of the Appendix to each candidate taking the Irish Common Oral Examination for their attention.

## **10. MOBILE PHONES/RECORDING/ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Candidates should be instructed by the school authority that **mobile phones and/or other recording/electronic devices, other than recording by the examiner, are prohibited in the examination room** and that such devices are to be left outside. (Exception: candidates who rely on a diabetes management app may keep the device with them for the duration of the examination. It must be placed on a desk/table as directed by the examiner and, where possible, set to airplane mode if the app functions in that mode.)

## **11. CHECKING DETAILS OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS**

In advance of their arrival at your school, Oral examiners have been provided with details of any specific candidates who have been granted reasonable accommodations to access the Oral examinations under the SEC's Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations (RACE Scheme). This includes details of any candidates who are vision impaired, deaf/hard of hearing, who have a speech impediment, or otherwise who require the support of an additional person during the examinations. Specific guidance has been provided to examiners who will be providing oral examinations to candidates who are deaf/hard of hearing or who have a speech impediment.

To ensure that appropriate arrangements are put in place, school authorities must engage with the examiners immediately upon their arrival at the school to cross check with them their records of candidates being provided with access arrangements under the RACE Scheme.

School authorities may also put practical measures in place such as scheduling the candidate(s) first or last in the order of entry.

## **12. CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE ORAL EXAMINATIONS RESULTS**

The examinations will be conducted entirely by the examiners who, subject to monitoring by the SEC, will decide the marks to be assigned to the candidates. The marks assigned are strictly confidential and may be communicated only to the SEC. Schools are advised that examiners and advising examiners are

expressly prohibited from divulging any information with regard to candidates' performance in the Oral examinations. Therefore, examiners should not be asked about the performance of candidates.

### **13. ENQUIRIES**

Issues of concern in relation to these examinations should be made by School Management or his or her appointed representative directly to the Orals Section of the SEC as soon as they come to light.

Queries related to the Oral examinations should be directed by email to [orals@examinations.ie](mailto:orals@examinations.ie) or by telephone to 090 6442741 or 090 6442700.

It is noted that the period during which examinations are being held can give rise to unexpected issues or concerns. Over the course of the window for the conduct of these examinations, staff of the SEC will be on hand to address these issues as and when they arise. No information relating to examination outcomes will be disclosed.

Richard Dolan  
Director of Operations  
State Examinations Commission  
March 2026

## APPENDIX 1.

### **Specific information in relation to Leaving Certificate Irish Common Oral Examination 2026**

*Please bring the following to the attention of candidates.*

#### **The Picture Sequence**

In accordance with the document, *Assessment Arrangements for Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate Examinations 2026*, the candidate will have prepared 10 Picture Sequences from the 20 Picture Sequences 2026.

The candidate must give a list of the titles of the 10 Picture Sequences that they have prepared to the examiner at the beginning of their Oral examination. Before starting the Picture Sequence, the candidate will be asked to choose at random one Picture Sequence from the 20 Picture Sequences. If the title of that Picture Sequence is on the candidate's list, they will keep that Picture Sequence. If the Picture Sequence chosen is not on the candidate's list of 10, the candidate will be allowed to choose another Picture Sequence until such time as the Picture Sequence chosen is on the candidate's list.