



**Coimisiún na Scrúduithe Stáit**  
*State Examinations Commission*  
**Corr na Madadh, Baile Átha Luain, Co. na hIarmhí**  
*Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath.N37TP65*

**S88/24**

**IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT IN RELATION TO ORAL EXAMINATIONS IN IRISH AND  
MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES FOR LEAVING CERTIFICATE 2025**  
**TO THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT/AUTHORITIES OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND OTHER  
ENTITIES RECOGNISED BY THE SEC TO HOLD THE LEAVING CERTIFICATE ESTABLISHED  
EXAMINATIONS**

**1. Purpose of Circular**

The purpose of this circular is to:

- Advise that the 2025 Leaving Certificate Oral examinations in Gaeilge and Modern Foreign Languages will be delivered during the first week of the Easter holidays.
- Provide some preliminary information on the arrangements for the Oral examinations.
- Provide information in relation to the recruitment of Oral examiners and seek the assistance of schools with examiner recruitment.
- Outline the contingency arrangements that will apply in the event that the number of examiners is insufficient to conduct the examinations as scheduled.
- Outline the additional supports that will be available to schools including additional exam aide days specifically to provide Pastoral support for candidates.

**2. Timing of the Oral Examinations in 2025**

The Oral examinations in Irish and the Modern Foreign Languages in 2025 will be delivered by SEC appointed examiners in schools in the early part of the Easter holiday period from **Saturday 12 April to Thursday 17 April inclusive**. We can confirm that the Oral examinations in 2026 and 2027 will also be delivered under the same arrangement at which point a further review will be conducted.

**3. Rationale for the decision on this timing.**

As part of her announcement on Senior Cycle Redevelopment in March 2022, the Minister for Education Ms Norma Foley T.D. also announced her intention that the Oral examinations in Gaeilge and the Modern Foreign Languages would be held in the first week of the Easter holidays to alleviate the disruption caused to teaching and learning by running the Oral

examinations in term time. The Minister requested that the SEC conduct a review of this timing and provide advice to her Department as to the timing of the Oral examinations going forward.

The SEC has undertaken an evaluation of the timing of the Oral examinations in order to best advise the Minister on the timing into the future. The inputs to the SEC's advice on this complex issue included consideration of the historical position, the impact of the more recent changes to the timing, and the research undertaken for the SEC by the College of Education in the University of Galway. The candidates' best interests have been to the fore throughout this review as well as a desire to ensure that the system provides for fair and equitable delivery of the Oral examinations.

The SEC has carefully considered how best to progress this advice noting the challenges and issues associated with the timing; the outcomes of the research work, as well as the experience of delivering the Oral examinations during term time and in the Easter holidays over the past number of years. Ultimately, on balance we consider that candidates' interests will be best served by the least possible interruption to their teaching and learning and by as much assurance as possible that the SEC can deliver examinations and assessment to the published timeframes.

The considered view of the SEC at this time is that the Leaving Certificate Oral examinations should continue to be delivered during the Easter holidays, under the same timing model as applied from 2022 to 2024, for the next three years until the 2026/2027 school year and be subject to review after the conclusion of the 2027 examinations. This advice has now been accepted by the Minister.

Maintaining the timing at Easter for the next three years will provide certainty to three cohorts of Leaving Certificate candidates about the timing of their examinations and will deliver stability to the school system in relation to their planning for future years.

#### **4. Key Points**

- The model of delivery for 2025 will be the same as the model for the Oral examinations in 2024.
- The examiner training conferences for the 2025 Oral examinations will continue to be held in school time and attendance at these conferences is mandatory, noting that paid substitution is available for this and other examination related absences.
- Scheduling the examinations over the first week of the Easter holidays will limit teacher absences from school (given the current challenges associated with sourcing substitute teachers). Furthermore, it assists in minimising disruption to teaching and learning in schools and in particular for those candidates preparing for their examinations.
- Conducting the Oral examinations at Easter is contingent on the SEC receiving sufficient applications from teachers for roles on the examining teams. If sufficient

applications are not received the SEC will develop contingency arrangements where necessary.

- The SEC will seek to prioritise examinations in those schools which have teachers acting as external examiners.
- Schools are required to ensure that any contingency arrangements needed, which may include delayed examinations, are clearly notified to candidates and parents at the earliest opportunity. Should this be required, the SEC will engage with schools in this regard.
- By arranging these examinations in the first week of the Easter holidays, it will provide that examiners, candidates, and school staff have a consecutive ten-day break from school after the examinations have been completed.
- As was the case in 2024, in recognition of the changed workload associated with this Easter model of delivery, an additional 8 Examination Aide days will be available to schools with 120 Leaving Certificate candidates or fewer while 10 days will be available to those schools with in excess of 120 Leaving Certificate candidates.
- An additional five Examination Aide days will be available to all schools so that school authorities can appoint a member of staff, in addition to the appointment of the Examination Aide, to provide pastoral support to candidates and to ensure their attendance at the time of the delivery of the Oral examinations over the Easter holiday period. This is the same arrangement that applied in 2024.
- A schedule of the relevant 2025 dates is included at Appendix 1.
- The SEC intends to publish the 2025 detailed Written Examinations timetables and the schedules of dates for the Oral and Practical examinations before the Christmas holidays.

## **5. Overview of 2025 Delivery Model**

For the 2025 Leaving Certificate, Oral examinations will be held in Irish, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Japanese, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese.

Oral examinations in these subjects will be conducted over a six-day period commencing on Saturday 12 April and concluding on Thursday 17 April 2025. This circular does not apply to the Oral examinations in the Leaving Certificate Applied.

The examinations will be conducted by SEC appointed examiners, recruited and assigned to schools by the SEC.

Under the traditional arrangements (pre-2022), a candidate would not have their Irish Oral and their Oral examinations in the Modern Foreign Languages in the same week (although they could have Oral examinations in multiple Modern Foreign Languages in the same five-day period).

School authorities (i.e. the school principal or their authorised representative for this work) will be required to pay particular attention to the scheduling of candidates in the school to take account of their individual subject considerations. School authorities are asked to be

cognisant of the demands on candidates and to avoid scheduling multiple tests on one day to the greatest degree possible.

All of the days Saturday to Thursday inclusive will be available for scheduling these examinations. Working with the SEC, and the examiners assigned to the school, and depending on the availability of examiners, schools may have some flexibility if there is a particular day over the six days on which examinations cannot be held due to local needs. However, in choosing not to use the full six days, schools will be asked to be cognisant of the impact of the scheduling on candidates and particularly the impact on those entered for multiple language subjects. The more examiners that we have the more likely it will be that flexibility for schools will be possible within this six-day window.

In the event that it is not possible to facilitate all of the examinations in the 6-day period, two contingency days have been identified. The contingency days are Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025. Decisions on the use of the contingency days will be made by the SEC in conjunction with the SEC appointed examiners. The SEC will need to be satisfied that it is not practicable to hold the examinations without availing of one or both of those contingency days. It will not be up to individual schools to seek to arrange examinations on these days in the first instance.

In the interest of equity and fairness, it will not be possible to make bespoke arrangements for individual candidates, groups of candidates or schools. This includes, but is not limited to, sporting events, competitions, school trips, holidays or type of school.

In line with traditional arrangements, candidates who miss their Oral language examination due to illness or close family bereavement will be facilitated with a later examination in the week commencing 19 May. Evidence of illness/bereavement is required to support this arrangement.

## **6. Examiner Recruitment**

In the coming week the SEC will commence the recruitment of Leaving Certificate Oral examiners for 2025. The rate of remuneration for SEC Oral examiners, which includes a premium for examining over the Easter holiday period, will be notified by the SEC to applicants as part of the recruitment process. These rates are contained in Appendix 1 of this circular for information. Examiners also receive travel expenses and subsistence allowances. While the benefits of examining go beyond the financial, we are pleased to advise that the additional rate increases secured for 2023 and 2024 have been assured for the 2025 examinations.

The SEC will be offering automatic appointments to examiners who meet the relevant criteria and who were previously appointed in 2024. New applications will also be invited.

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 is 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. We are again calling on school leaders to actively support our recruitment efforts this year in promoting the value of examining roles for the State Examinations to your staff which include developing the quality of their teaching as well as their assessment competence. The SEC will be seeking the active assistance and support of the second-level school system in ensuring that we will have sufficient examiners available to conduct these examinations in 2025. In particular, we expect that releasing examiners for a one-day training conferences will not be any impediment to participation. The SEC is extremely grateful to all stakeholders for their assistance in ensuring that sufficient examiners were recruited to conduct the 2024 examinations and looks forward to the same level of co-operation in the 2025 examiner recruitment process.

Examiners are primarily recruited from a pool of experienced serving and retired teachers. The most essential requirement for examiners is subject competence and any personnel appointed to mark the State Examinations must be appropriately qualified. Examiners will be selected on the basis of their academic qualifications, their teaching experience and their examination experience. New applicants for these positions will be required to complete an interview to demonstrate their language competence.

## **7. Contingency Measures**

In the event that we do not reach the required number of examiners it may be necessary to put in place contingency arrangements. In this regard, I can advise as follows;

- That it may not be possible to provide for the delivery of all subjects in all schools in the period Saturday 12 to Thursday 17 April.
- That it may be necessary to schedule some examinations on the contingency days of Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025.
- That as a result, some teachers appointed for examining work will need to be out of school for these two days.
- That if it is not possible to provide for all examinations on Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025 then the examinations will be rescheduled to the window for the late Orals commencing in week commencing 19 May.
- That any rescheduling of examinations to the late Orals window will require teachers undertaking roles as Oral examiners, to be out of school for possibly 5 days in May to cover these duties.

Should this become necessary the SEC will endeavour to notify affected schools at the earliest opportunity noting that such arrangements might become necessary at short notice. No doubt there will be disappointment for schools and candidates should it be necessary to delay their examinations as set out above. However, if examiner numbers are at the required level then the need for contingency arrangements will dissipate.

## 8. Financial Support for School Authorities

- i. **Examinations Aide Days:** The SEC provides financial support for schools in the administration of the annual Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examinations. Under the current 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 Examination Aide days are to be used for both the written examinations and the related assessment components. Details are provided below of additional days to be used for the Oral language examinations in 2025.

As was the case in 2024, in recognition of the changed workload associated with this Easter model of delivery, an additional 8 Examination Aide days will be available to schools with 120 Leaving Certificate candidates or fewer while 10 days will be available to those schools with in excess of 120 Leaving Certificate candidates.

The provision of these additional Examination Aide days is intended to act as a support to school leaders at examination time in order to alleviate some of the administrative burden associated with examinations. Principals are not required to be in attendance in school on these days in the Easter holidays and are empowered to assign a member of teaching staff to discharge the Examination Aide days in respect of these examinations.

- ii. **Pastoral Support for Candidates.** Under the same Examinations Aide model, the SEC is continuing a further resource for school authorities introduced in 2024. For the 2025 examinations, an additional five Examination Aide days will be available to all schools so that school authorities can appoint a member of staff, in addition to the appointment of the Examination Aide, to provide pastoral support to candidates and to ensure their attendance at the time of the delivery of the Oral examinations over the Easter holiday period. Further details of this resource will be provided in due course. It is intended that this person would not be involved in the operational and administrative duties associated with the Oral examinations but would be available to students onsite during the Oral examinations. It is expected that the person selected for this role will make themselves known to the candidates in your school prior to the examinations so that the candidates can contact them when necessary.
- iii. **Caretaking/light/heat/etc.:** Reasonable additional costs specifically incurred in relation to light, heat, cleaning and caretaking, within schools, associated with the Oral examinations taking place in the Easter holidays will be reimbursed by the SEC.
- iv. **Transport:** To facilitate attendance by candidates reliant on the school transport scheme, schools will be asked to arrange taxi services for examinations events at the Easter Holidays where necessary and to recover the costs from the SEC.

## **9. Further Information**

The SEC will issue a more detailed circular prior to the examinations in 2025 with further details of these arrangements including details in relation to the management of the examinations during the 6-day period over the Easter holidays and the financial support arrangements available to schools.

In the meantime, I would appreciate your assistance in bringing the details of these arrangements to the attention of school staff, students and parents/guardians.

## **10. Enquiries**

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.

Thank you for your support and assistance with these important examinations.

Richard Dolan  
Director of Operations  
State Examinations Commission  
December 2024

## Appendix 1 – Leaving Certificate Orals 2025 - Rates and Dates

### A. Payment Rates

The rates of pay for Oral examiners for 2025 are as follows. These rates include an additional €6 per test first approved in 2022 and a premium of c. €11 for conducting the tests at Easter. For 2025, the rates have been increased by the public sector increases as they apply to examination rates of pay.

- Leaving Certificate Irish Foundation Level **€21.31** per candidate (2019 rate €7.00)
- All other Oral examinations **€28.55** per candidate (2019 rate €9.38)
- Revised Arrangement Fee **€243.59** per appointment (2019 rate n/a)

Examiners also receive travel expenses and subsistence allowances in addition to the above.

### B. 2025 Schedule of Dates

Event	Date
<b>Schools Close for Easter Holidays</b>	Friday 11 April
<b>Leaving Certificate Orals commence - Day 1</b>	Saturday 12 April
<b>Active Examining Days</b>	Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
<b>Leaving Certificate Orals Finish - Day 6</b>	Thursday 17 April
<b>Good Friday</b>	Friday 18 April
<b>Easter Sunday</b>	Sunday 20 April
<b>Schools Reopen</b>	Monday 28 April
<b>Leaving Certificate Orals Contingency Days</b>	Tuesday 6 and Wednesday 7 May 2025
<b>Late Orals (illness/bereavement)</b>	W/B 19 May (TBC)